

**Building Sites In The Expanding Field**

**Volume One**

**Andrew Jonathan Broadey**

**Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**The University of Leeds**

**School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies**

**September 2013**

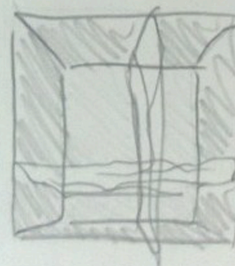
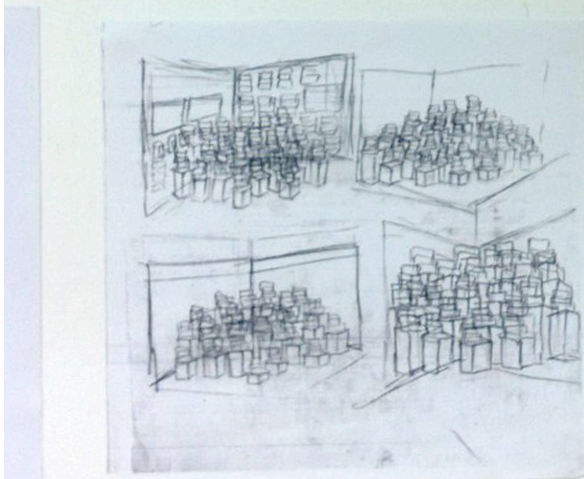
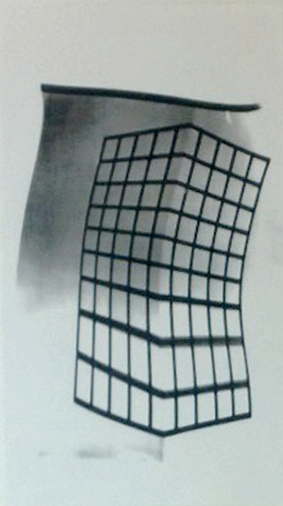
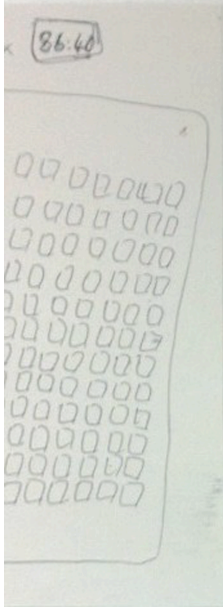
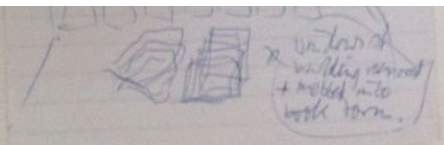


The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

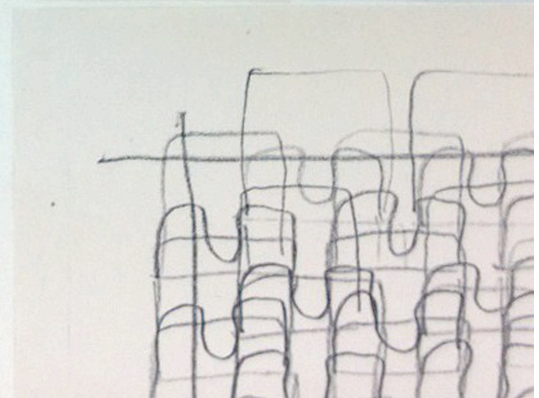
This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement

© 2013 The University of Leeds and Andrew Jonathan Broadey

The right of Andrew Jonathan Broadey to be identified as Author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.



1	2	3	4	5	6
16	17	18	19	20	21
31	32	33	34	35	36
46	47	48	49	50	51
61	62	63	64	65	66
76	77	78	79	80	81
91	92	93	94	95	96



### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisors, Roger Palmer and Joanne Crawford, for their dedicated assistance in the development of this project. I would especially like to thank Roger for his commitment towards the development of my art practice over the last nine years. I would also like to thank my partner, Valerie O'Riordan, for her generous assistance in the realisation of this project and for being a constant source of support throughout it, as well as my daughter Seren for being the most wonderful addition to my life.

### Abstract

*Building Sites In The Expanding Field* is a two-part research project that examines, through art practice and theory components, relations between institutional critique and white cube gallery conventions at the start of the twenty-first century. The project responds to commentaries by critics such as John Roberts, David Beech and Stewart Martin, in which notions of participation, sociability and conviviality – modes of interaction identified by the curator Nicolas Bourriaud with relational installation – are framed as the institutional framework of the work's articulation. My project, in contrast, examines the relevance of earlier modes of institutional critique to this post-relational moment; it is intended also to bring focus to my own practice of architectural intervention. The project's core problematic is the way in which the ubiquitous frame of display known as the white cube gallery continues to inform gallery design and thus shapes the parameters of artistic reception and critical art practice. My thesis is that the architectural frames of gallery spaces continue to support an ideological construction of artistic reception as a mode of encounter indebted to the legacy of minimalist art and set apart from the instrumentality of capitalist production and consumption outside the gallery's walls. I argue that critical intervention within gallery architecture can prompt people to critically question the relation between the roles or identities they adopt in these spaces and the function that the spaces themselves perform. To this end, I examine historical debates that have linked institutional critique and architectural intervention with notions of allegory, focusing particularly upon the contributions of Michael Asher, Brian O'Doherty, Rosalind E. Krauss, Benjaimin H. D. Buchloh and Craig Owens, and presenting recent post-relational debates in relation to the legacy of the white cube gallery. The key contribution of both the practice and theory components of my project is my critical analysis of the legacy of the white cube gallery beyond the moment of relational installation, as a context open to re-appropriation through allegorical readings that draw forth the processes of its socio-historical construction. Whilst legacies of critical postmodernism figure in post-relational debates staged recently in journals and magazines such as *Third Text* and *Art Monthly*, my project draws explicit links between contemporary modes of artistic display and critique, and this moment.

## Table Of Contents

### Volume One

List of Illustrations	5
Introduction	9
Year One (2007/8)	19
Year Two (2008/9)	30
Year Three (2009/10)	41
Year Four (2010/11)	54
Conclusion	63
Postscript – Years Five and Six (2011-13)	65
Volume One Bibliography	82

### Volume Two

List of Illustrations	5
Introduction	8
Chapter One: Exhibition As Medium	16
1. Art Versus Life	17
2. The Historical Emergence of the White Cube Gallery	21
3. The Avant-Garde and the Neo-Avant-Garde	23
4. High Modernism and the Challenge of Minimalism	26
5. An Emergent Critique of the Gallery Space	37
6. The Protest Movement and its Impact on Art Practice	40
7. Michael Asher's 'Spaces' and Pomona College Installations	49
8. The Relation Between the Installation and Site	58
9. Inside the White Cube	63
10. The Expanded Field	70
11. Postmodern Allegory	74
Chapter Two: Institution As Medium	79

1. Michael Asher's Claire Copley Gallery installation	80
2. Language, Reflexivity and the Emergence of Institutional Critique	82
3. Post-Studio Art	91
4. <i>Aspen 5+6 92</i>	
5. The Allegorical Structure of Asher's Claire Copley Gallery Installation	98
6. Literal and Figural/Rhetorical Meaning	105
7. Re-addressing the Medium	111
8. Aesthetic Use-Value	112
9. The Institution of the Public Art Museum, University Art Centre and Commercial Art Gallery	115
Chapter Three: Critical Distance as Medium	120
1. Critical Distance	121
2. The Functional Site	129
2a. Asher's 'Agreement Commissioning Works of Art' (1975)	130
2b. <i>Writings 1973-83 on Works 1969-79</i>	132
2c. The Functional Site	135
3. Second Wave Institutional Critique	139
4. Flexible Accumulation and Critical Services	141
5. The Late-Capitalist Art Museum	147
6. Relational Practice	154
7. Recursion and the Return of the Medium	161
8. 'Voids: A Retrospective'	168
9. Michael Asher's Santa Monica Museum of Art Installation	174
Conclusion	180
Volume Two Bibliography	186

### List of Illustrations

Fig. 1, Barnett Newman, <i>Adam</i> , oil on canvas, 238 x 172 cm, Tate Gallery, London, UK, 1951-2.	20
Fig. 2, Barnett Newman, <i>Eve</i> , oil on canvas, 243 x 202.9 cm, Tate Gallery, London, UK, 1950.	20
Fig. 3, Andy Broadey, <i>Sketches made before Adam (1951-2) and Eve (1950)</i> , Barnett Newman, pencil on paper, 10 x 10 cm, 2008.	21
Fig. 4, Barnett Newman, <i>Onement I</i> , oil on masking tape on canvas, 69.2 x 41.2 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1948.	22
Fig. 5, Andy Broadey, <i>Adam</i> , (1951-2), Letratone collage, 12 x 12 cm, 2008.	24
Fig. 6, Andy Broadey, <i>Eve</i> , (1950), Letratone collage, 12 x 12 cm, 2008.	24
Fig. 7, Andy Broadey, <i>Adam</i> , (1951-2), Letratone collage 15 x15 cm, 2008.	24
Fig. 8, Andy Broadey, <i>Eve</i> , (1950), Letratone collage, 15 x 15 cm, 2008.	24
Fig. 9, Andy Broadey, <i>Adam</i> (1951-2) studio installation, wood (various types), cardboard and clamps, 350 x 200 x 200 cm, 2008.	25
Fig. 10, Andy Broadey, ' <i>Adam</i> ' and ' <i>Eve</i> ' studio installation, wood (various types), cardboard clamps, mirrors, metal buckets and photocopies, 350 x 350 x 200 cm, 2008.	25
Fig. 11, Andy Broadey, ' <i>Adam</i> ' and ' <i>Eve</i> ' maquettes, studio installation, wood (various types), cardboard, clamps, mirrors, metal buckets and photocopies, 100 x 100 x 50 cm, 2008	26
Fig. 12, Andy Broadey, <i>Building an Image</i> , wood, cardboard, clamps, mirrors, metal buckets and photocopies, 800 x 500 x 300 cm, 2008.	27
Fig. 13, Andy Broadey, <i>Build Up</i> , wood (various types), cardboard, 500 x 300 x 250 cm, 2008.	29
Fig. 14, Ryan Gander, 'Heralded as the New Black' (installation view), mixed media, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK, 2008.	31
Fig. 15, Jonathan Monk, pages from the book, <i>None of the Buildings on Sunset Strip</i> , Artist's Book: softcover with dust jacket, 20.5 x 15.5 cm.	32
Fig. 16, Mike Nelson, <i>Triple Bluff Canyon</i> (installation view), MOMA Oxford, UK, 2004.	33

- Fig. 17, Robert Smithson, *Partially Buried Woodshed*, earthwork, Kent State University, Ohio, USA, 1970. 33
- Fig. 18, Monika Sosnowska, *Loop*, installation photograph, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, 2007. 34
- Fig. 19, Robert Morris, *Installation in the Green Gallery*, seven geometric plywood structures painted grey, Green Gallery, New York, USA, 1964. 35
- Fig. 20, Michael Asher, *Installation made on the occasion of the 73rd American Exhibition*, the Art Institute of Chicago, USA, 1979. 35
- Fig. 21, Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, Earthwork, at Rozel Point, Box Elder County, Utah, USA, 1970. 35
- Fig. 22, Carl Andre, *144 Magnesium Square*, magnesium tiles, collection of the Tate Gallery, 366 x 366 x 1 cm. 37
- Fig. 23, Andy Broadey, *From Wall to Floor*, studio installation, chipboard and wallpaper, 2009. 37
- Fig. 24, Andy Broadey, *Day Room* (installation view), installation presented at the 3rd Annual International Postgraduate Conference, 'The Politics and Policies of Communications: National, Transnational and Global Perspectives', University of Leeds, UK, 2009. 38
- Fig. 25, Andy Broadey, *Day Room* (exterior view), installation presented at the 3rd Annual International Postgraduate Conference, 'The Politics and Policies of Communications: National, Transnational and Global Perspectives', University of Leeds, UK, 2009. 38
- Fig. 26, Andy Broadey, *Day Room Summer Solstice 2009*, (walls 3 and 2), 1200 6 x 4 inch digital photographs, gallery walls, 244 x 366 cm, 2009. 42
- Fig. 27, Andy Broadey, *Day Room Winter Solstice 2009*, (walls 2 and 3), 1200 6 x 4 inch digital photographs, gallery walls, 244 x 366 cm, 2009. 43
- Fig. 28, *Carousel Montage 7, 9 and 11*, 5 35mm slides, slide projectors, 5 plinths, gallery wall, variable dimensions, 2010. 45
- Fig. 29.1, Andy Broadey, *Display*, Photograph 7 from a series of 12, Diasc-mounted inkjet print onto Fuji satin paper, 18 x 12 inches, 2010. 47
- Fig. 29.2, Andy Broadey, *Display*, Photograph 9 from a series of 12, Diasc-mounted inkjet print onto Fuji satin paper, 18 x 12 inches, 2010. 47



- Fig. 30, 'Philosophy in Practice' exhibition (installation view), De Brakke Grond, Amsterdam, Holland, 2010. 48
- Fig. 31, Andy Broadey, *The Museum of Windows*, Hull Europort re-development plan, A1 plan print. 49
- Fig. 32, Andy Broadey, a selection of plan prints featured in the exhibition, 'The Museum of Windows', Bordesley Centre for Contemporary Art, Birmingham, UK, 2010. 52
- Fig. 33, Andy Broadey, 'The Museum of Windows', (installation view), Bordesley Centre for Contemporary Art, Birmingham, UK, 2010. 53
- Fig. 34, Andy Broadey, *Shadow Box*, (installation view), BLANKSPACE, Manchester, UK, 2011. 55
- Fig. 35, Andy Broadey, *Day Room*, (installation view), BLANKSPACE, Manchester, UK, 2011. 56
- Fig. 36, Dan Graham, *Public Space / Two Audiences*, installed in 'Ambiente Arte', 37<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, 1976. 56
- Fig. 37. 1, Andy Broadey, *Re-Model*, (installation view), installation presented in the Central Mineral Baths, Sofia, Bulgaria, as part of 'WaterTower Fest 2011'. 57
- Fig. 37. 2, Andy Broadey, *Re-Model*, (installation view), installation presented in the Central Mineral Baths, Sofia, Bulgaria, as part of 'WaterTower Fest 2011'. 58
- Fig. 38, Sofia, Central Mineral Baths (exterior view), designed by Petko Momchilov and Friedrich Grünanger, built 1904/5. 59
- Fig. 39, Sofia, Central Mineral Baths (exterior detail), designed by Petko Momchilov and Friedrich Grünanger, built 1904/5. 59
- Fig. 40, Sofia, Central Mineral Baths (interior view), designed by Petko Momchilov and Friedrich Grünanger, built 1904/5. 60
- Fig. 41, Sofia, Central Mineral Baths (interior detail), designed by Petko Momchilov and Friedrich Grünanger, built 1904/5. 60
- Fig. 42, Andy Broadey, *Sight Seeing* (installation view), framed laser-jet prints on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Deep Matte Paper, part of the 'WaterTower Art Fest 2012'. 69
- Fig. 43, Andy Broadey, *The National Palace of Culture in Sofia*,

- re-photographed from Philip Ward, *Bulgaria: A Travel Guide*, (Cambridge: Oleander Press, 1989), p. 100, laser-jet print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Deep Matte Paper, scanned from Kodak Colour Plus film negative. Part of the installation *Sight Seeing*, presented at 'WaterTower Art Fest 2012'. 70
- Fig. 44, Andy Broadey, *Ruse Opera House*, re-photographed from Philip Ward, *Bulgaria: A Travel Guide*, (Cambridge: Oleander Press, 1989), p. 138, laser-jet print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Deep Matte Paper, scanned from Kodak Colour Plus film negative. Part of the installation *Sight Seeing*, presented at 'WaterTower Art Fest 2012'. 70
- Fig. 45, Andy Broadey, *Wooden Dolls for Sale in a Museum Shop*, re-photographed from Julien Popescu, *Bulgaria*, (Hong Kong: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 46, laser-jet print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Deep Matte Paper, from scanned from Kodak Colour Plus film negative. Part of the installation *Sight Seeing*, presented at 'WaterTower Art Fest 2012'. 71
- Fig. 46, *AGE OF COOPERATIVES*. Postcard Collection on sale at 'Co-operatives United' (29th Oct – 2nd Nov 2012), Gmex/Manchester Central. 72
- Fig. 47, C.W.S Cornflakes packet, circa 1930s. 72
- Fig. 48, Andy Broadey, *Labour and Wait*, cement wall drawing, presented as a postcard as part of the collection *AGE OF COOPERATIVES*, at 'Co-operatives United', at the Gmex/Manchester Central in Manchester (29th Oct – 2nd Nov 2012). 73
- Fig. 49, Andy Broadey, *Still*, 35mm slide projection from Agfa Precisa 100 film, installed at Sofia Arsenal Museum for Contemporary Art, as part of 'WaterTower Art Fest 2013'. 74
- Fig. 50, Andy Broadey, *Still*, a selection (numbers 52-67 presented here in sequence) from the eighty slides that comprise the work, from Agfa Precisa 100 film, 2013. 80-81

## Introduction

My research project, *Building Sites in the Expanding Field*, seeks to identify how, at a point in time when ‘art’ as a category appears to be continually expanding, conventions of exhibition-making continue to condition public presentations of art. My project focuses upon the importance of ‘white cube galleries’ in the production of public exhibitions of art, and how these white, clean, brightly-lit environments have continued to facilitate a diversification of forms of art practice, including the nomination of objects and forms of social interaction as art, simply because the gallery itself continues to provide a frame within which they can be received as art. The white cube format has also facilitated the development of new modes of artistic display, such as artist-run spaces, art fairs, biennials and enormous new art museums. Each of these new types of site combines the visual appearance of the white cube model with other forms of architecture, thus organising diverse spaces around the function of art appreciation. Therefore, the norms of display that are provided by white cube conventions continue to play a pivotal role in the demarcation of the border between art and life, screening displays of art from the intrusion of the outside world. It is my aim, with this practice-driven project, to examine and develop methods of art practice that take this bounding frame, constituted by white cube conventions, as a site of critical intervention, as well as to address the processes through which both these practices and conventions are socially re-produced and transformed.

This project responds to a tradition of institutional critique – a set of practices that have developed since the late 1960s, the common mode of production of which is intervention within the institutional frameworks through which art practices tend to be socially demarcated. Institutional critique has continued to shape the work of a diverse set of artists, and intervention within the architectural structures of art galleries has, since the time of institutional critique's emergence, been a key methodology employed by art practitioners such as Michael Asher and Daniel Buren. One of my key contentions in this study is that such modes of architectural intervention remain as urgent today as they did then. Thus the question of how artists engage with the gallery space remains a pivotal issue for practitioners who, responding to examples like Asher's, work on the border between art and life and who seek to open the gallery space

to critical commentary. To work in this way is to wed practice to the inevitable institutional framework through which art reaches public audiences, and to contest the function of that framework. Reflecting on the practice of architectural intervention, Daniel Buren says,

To imply in the work the place where it is situated (whether internal or external) is to give limits materially and visually, without leaving an escape route. It is also to bind oneself to a certain given reality to which the work if necessary will undertake to criticise, to emphasise, to contradict, in a word to dispute dialectically. The sharpness of the comment will depend upon the precision of the intervention.<sup>1</sup>

The artworks that I examine, as well as the artworks that I have developed in the practical component of this project, all use such dialectical disputes to challenge and invigorate the field of architectural intervention. Moreover, I contend that their consideration and manipulation of the white cube format demonstrates not only the continuing validity of that set of gallery display conditions as a subject and setting for art practice, but also the still-unfolding possibilities for practitioners to move their work beyond the physical and conceptual limits of the gallery framework and into the wider field of art practice – a field that is ever-expanding. In light of these issues, I will address three core research questions:

- 1) What role has the white cube format played in the historical development of practices of institutional critique?
- 2) In what ways do white cube conventions continue to set the institutional parameters of artistic display and reception, and to what extent should they remain the focus of critical art practices?
- 3) How should art practitioners working now in the field of institutional critique acknowledge and engage with the modes of practice and display that have historically constituted this field?

---

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Buren, 'The Function of Architecture: Notes on work in connection with the places where it is installed taken between 1967 and 1975, some of which are specially summarised here', in *Thinking About*

My project focuses upon a lineage of installations that have critically commented upon how white cube conventions have historically shaped the public reception of art, drawing out the continued relevance of these modes of practice to the contestation of contemporary frameworks of display.

These histories of use have stabilised white cube conventions in ways that have now made it possible for architects, museum directors, curators, gallerists or anyone else involved in constructing sites of artistic display to re-assign functions to a range of architectural spaces. Since the 1960s, the modest public and private white cube galleries within which artists like Asher and Buren intervened have been expanded to create vast museum spaces, such as the Bilbao Guggenheim, and have been displaced onto industrial sites to produce institutions such as the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. Thus, white cube conventions have facilitated an expansion in the quantity and scale of museum spaces worldwide. In 2012, for instance, the Guggenheim Bilbao attracted 1,014,104 visitors, the Museum of Modern Art New York, 2,805,659 visitors, and Tate Modern, 5,304,710 visitors.<sup>2</sup> As well as being an incredibly popular attraction, Tate Modern is also a very large building. Designed by Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron on the site of a former power station, the museum boasts a 371,350 square feet of interior floor space.<sup>3</sup> Yet its success has brought about further expansion, with an extension designed by the same architects currently under construction that will add 242,101 square feet to the original building.<sup>4</sup>

In light of this expansion in art's museum and gallery infrastructure facilitated by the reuse and reassignment of white cube conventions, a key contention of my project is that white cube conventions continue to be pivotal in the separation of art and life. Throughout the study I examine this spatial separation of art and life, and the differentiation of encounters within and beyond the frame of the gallery with reference to the notion of autonomy, as developed by Peter Bürger in *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1976). Bürger defines autonomy as art's 'functional mode' within a broader process of social development, conditioned upon art's 'independence in the face of the

---

<sup>2</sup> 'Visitor Figures 2012: Exhibition and Museum Survey', *The Art Newspaper*, Section 2, Number 245, April 2013, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Mignon Nixon, Alex Potts, Briony Fer, Antony Hudek and Julian Stallabrass, 'Round Table: Tate Modern', *October*, 98 (Autumn, 2001), 3-25, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Transforming Tate Modern Environmental Statement: Non Technical Summary*, <<http://www.tate.org.uk/about/projects/tate-modern-project/design/>> [accessed 11 September 2013].

demand that it be socially useful.<sup>5</sup> He also correlates this development with the historical emergence of art as an institution, which he defines as a 'productive and distributive apparatus', and also, 'the ideas about art that prevail at a given time and that determine the reception of works.'<sup>6</sup> At various stages, Bürger refers to art's 'disassociation', and the 'apartness', the 'insulation of art', and the 'splitt[ing] off' of art from life;<sup>7</sup> his theory is especially useful to this study because of his attention to both the physical and ideological mechanisms through which this separation is constructed. Furthermore, Bürger's attention to art's autonomy highlights this social construction as the site from which any form of art as critique has to be demarcated. Bürger notes, 'Art in bourgeois society lives off the tension between the institutional framework [...] and the possible political content [...] of individual works.'<sup>8</sup> Inherent in his claim is the assertion of a continuum between an absolute separation of art from life and the total dissolution of art into political practice, and in such a context, institutional demarcation is the condition upon which any possibility of art as social critique rests.

The social production of artistic autonomy has also motivated the recent writings of the American art historian Rosalind E. Krauss. She has lately returned to questions of how spaces of artistic display frame exhibits as art and how critical practitioners can turn the autonomy status of the gallery to critical ends. Against forms of post-medium practice, which she feels use the enclosing frame of the gallery to legitimise the array objects, videos and modes of participation that they present as art, she contrasts recursively structured practices that appropriate and mobilise existing modes of production in order to critically interrogate them. A key example of post-medium art that Krauss cites in her new book *Under Blue Cup* (2011) is relational art. This mode of practice came to public attention in the 1990s, and has largely been read through the French curator Nicolas Bourriaud's claim that the production of modes of social interaction is a key value in art practice.<sup>9</sup>

Within the current post-relational and post-medium context, such practices are

---

<sup>5</sup> Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 49, 48, 31, 56.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Krauss quotes Bourriaud's contention that 'the liveliest factor played out on the chessboard of art has to do with interactive, user-friendly and relational concepts.' Rosalind E. Krauss, *Under Blue Cup* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 2011), p. 68; quoting Bourriaud in Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: les presses du réel, 1998), p. 8.

often framed in terms of complicity with the institutional frameworks they inhabit. Indeed, the parameters of critical practice have also recently been re-asserted in reappraisals of relational practices, which have used the writings of Nicolas Bourriaud as a theoretical point of departure. In the writings of David Beech, notions of participation are correlated with the acceptance of a project's pre-determined parameters rather than with critical agency,<sup>10</sup> and in the commentary of John Roberts, 'corrective distance' is re-asserted as a necessary condition of critical practice.<sup>11</sup> 2005 saw a resurgence of discussions around institutional critique, debates in which questions of critical distance were also re-asserted. These were noted in Andrea Fraser's *Artforum* article, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique' (2005).<sup>12</sup> She cites the 2005 conference 'Institutional Critique and After', at the LA County Museum<sup>13</sup> and an issue of the art magazine *Texte Zur Kunst* that was dedicated to this topic that same year.<sup>14</sup> Another key concurrent development was the initiation of the project 'Transform', by the European Institute of Progressive Cultural Policies that led to the 2009 publication, *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*, edited by Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray.<sup>15</sup>

This re-emergence of institutional critique as a key debate in contemporary art practice and theory correlates with widespread contestations within the political sphere. 9/11, the British and American invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, the global financial crisis, anti-austerity campaigns, the Arab Spring, and the emergence of the Occupy movement have each raised in diverse contexts questions around political agency, each functioning in various ways as institutional critiques. In short, the contemporary political sphere is one of heightened debate, in which direct action outside of 'official' channels of political representation is becoming an increasingly common occurrence.

These recent developments in politics and art practice/theory share significant

---

<sup>10</sup> David Beech, 'Include me out!', *Art Monthly*, 315 (April 2008), 1-3, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> John Roberts, 'Art, 'Enclave Theory' and the Communist Imaginary', *Third Text*, 21: 4 (July 2007), 369-386, p. 376.

<sup>12</sup> Andrea Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique', *Artforum*, 44:1 (Sep 2005), 278-286, p. 280.

<sup>13</sup> John C. Welchman, ed., *Institutional Critique and After* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> *Texte Zur Kunst*, 'Institutionskritik', 59 (September 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray, *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique* (London: Mayfly Books, 2009).

correlations with the historical point of emergence of institutional critique as a mode of art practice in the aftermath of the international wave of protests that culminated in the Paris riots of May 1968, and the subsequent emergence of critical practitioners such as Michael Asher, Daniel Buren and Hans Haacke. The sense in which attention to the lineage of development that has shaped this current situation can be seen to reveal recurrences of themes drawn from historical moments within the present is acknowledged in the work of several of the artists and theorists with which I will engage. An early example of such an approach is Andrea Fraser's *Museum Highlights* (1989), a work in which the artist's own critical agency is articulated through the appropriated role of a museum guide, whose public oration is a construct made up of multiple citations. Recurrence is also a key theme in the Free Art Collective's Manifesto, an analysis of the challenges and opportunities facing contemporary art practitioners that nevertheless presents itself as a parody of Karl Marx and Frederick Engel's *Communist Manifesto*.<sup>16</sup>

Within the context of the practice-based component of the project, I have sought to examine the contemporary status of the 'white cube' format as a set of received display conventions, the status of which has already been stabilised, and the redeployment of which in the present continue to shape contemporary frameworks of display. I have created a series of installations that create conjunctions between architectural components of white cube galleries and modes of photographic representation, using the capacity of the photographic images to show moments in the past, whilst materially inhabiting contexts in the present. This process was anticipated early in the project through the installations *Building an Image* and *Build Up*, both realised in 2008, in which drawings depicting my act of viewing Barnett Newman's paintings *Adam* (1951/2) and *Eve* (1950) became a template for two installations that allowed people to walk through a record of that experience. In 2009, I built upon this methodology in the project *Day Room*, which was realised by layering photographic records of light conditions within a gallery space made over a twenty-four hour period, upon the same walls the photographs themselves recorded. Projects such as *Day Room* allowed me to

---

<sup>16</sup> Dave Beech, Andy Hewitt, and Mel Jordan, *Free Art Collective Manifesto for a Counter-Hegemonic Art* (Loughborough: Freee Publishing, 2007)



simultaneously materialise contrasting moments in the same contexts. In *Re-Model*, a project I developed in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 2011, I was able to use architectural components of a mineral bath house in the process of its conversion into a museum space, in order to produce an installation that reflected on this process of transformation. I developed these manipulations of architectural structure through engagements with artists such as Jonathan Monk and Ryan Gander, artists for whom the re-circulation of conceptual works of the 1960s drive their artistic production. As the project has developed, my focus upon materialising periods of time has shifted towards an engagement with political histories. A more recent work, *Still* (2013), an installation realised through 35mm slide projection, re-imagined the process of recording architectural spaces over a period of twenty-four hours within the corridors of the Memorial House for the Bulgarian Communist Party, designed by Guéorguy Stoilov.

The case is similar with the corresponding theoretical study. I have traced the emergence, development and continued relevance of issues around institutional critique within the fields of art practice and theory, drawing specifically on the historical relation between this mode of practice and white cube conventions in the art of Michael Asher and the writing of Brian O'Doherty. Asher's works interrogate the function of the same gallery architecture about which O'Doherty writes; both critically interrogate specific mobilisations of white cube conventions in a range of historical moments that I, in this project, seek to situate in a process of reproduction and transformation. My study begins at the moment of Asher's and O'Doherty's emergence in the late 1960s, a context of practice and display in which debates around high modernist painting and sculpture were still significant, and debates around minimalist installation had reached a developed stage. For Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried, the gallery space was an expedient but unremarked context for encounters with high modernist artworks, such as the colourfield paintings of Jules Olitski, which used a literal treatment of the picture surface as a means for articulating luminous pictorial fields through depicted shape. Forms of minimalist art, then, appeared to undermine these conventions from within, turning them towards the examination of the literal shape of three-dimensional works, and introducing the gallery space as an empty spatial framework in relation to which these works were encountered. However, the social construction of the gallery space and the ideological ramifications of its function remained an unremarked support for

these works. In the practice of Michael Asher and the writings of Brian O'Doherty, this institutional framework and the manner in which it supported the autonomy of displays became an explicit focus. O'Doherty's analysis of installations of high modernist art consider how the architectural and ideological framework of the gallery space supported readings of the medium specificity of high modernist art – its attunement to the structure of the visual field, upon which it remarks – because the blankness of the white wall served as an ideal support for such readings.

Rosalind Krauss poses a similar argument with regard to the emergence of installation art, viewing the development of such modes of practice in the work of artists such as Michael Asher in terms of set of procedural displacements within the framework in which the autonomy of high modernist art is constituted. Thus, from the viewpoint of this reading, it is a misconception to identify artworks constituted through a break with art's normalised supports (such as painting and sculpture) with a break from medium specificity. Rather, practices that are referred to by different voices throughout this study as installation, environmental art, architectural intervention and institutional critique, are framed by Krauss as 'axiomatic structures', issuing from the opposition between sculpture and architecture; the dismantling of sculptural form into the architectural frame of the gallery, as a critique of the border drawn between art and life.

The argument that I pursue throughout the study seeks to join the supports nominated in the context of institutional critique and the architectural frames of apparatuses of display into a close relation with one another, one that ultimately hinges on the nomination of function, and, more importantly, the critical ends to which these structures are mobilised. I pursue these debates up to the present day, focusing upon the relationship between critical distance and mediation. I focus upon the significance of Craig Owens' theory of allegory in 'The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism' to an understanding of the multiple modes of interpretation that architectural interventions make available to people who encounter them, as well as considering how modes of critical intervention have themselves become an integral component of art institutional display environments. Taking into account the relations drawn by Miwon Kwon and Andrea Fraser between critical practice and the service sector of the economy, as well as examining the expansion and commercialisation of the

museum spaces themselves, I examine Rosalind Krauss's contrast between relational (post-medium) and recursive forms of installation practice. Ultimately, drawing upon the critical contribution of David Beech, I consider the crux of contemporary institutional critique to hinge upon changing the way autonomy functions within the gallery space. Through a recursive reading of the processes through which that state of autonomy is perpetually re-constituted and thus stabilised I argue that artists can place the function of the gallery space under question, creating opportunities for people within the gallery to think and act autonomously.

I refer throughout to the writings of Louis Althusser, a Marxist philosopher whose work, in the aftermath of the protests of 1968, framed socio-economic development in a co-dependent relation to linguistically structured forms of ideology, to support this assertion. In Althusser's writings, questions of how the base structure (economic production) and superstructure (political and ideological institutions) of societies are reproduced are pursued. In Althusser's writing notions of structure are invoked to describe the cycles of repeated patterns of thought and behaviour out of which forms of normativity emerge and through which material contexts are ascribed functions. For Althusser, political practice begins through critical reading of the forms of ideology generated through such structures of social practice. In his analysis of Lenin's text, *What is to be Done* (1902), Althusser sets up and contrasts these terms, describing the mode of outlook that enabled Lenin to analyse and critique the social dynamics of pre-revolutionary Russia:

In the world [...] as Lenin lived it and understood it – because it was, as the existing world is, the sole concrete world in existence, the concrete of its currency, in the 'current situation' – Lenin analysed what constituted the characteristics of its structure: the essential articulations, the inter-connexions, the strategic nodes on which the fate of any revolutionary practice depended.<sup>17</sup>

Althusser argues that for Lenin the development of practices that might effect transformations within the social order rested within the task of critically reading that social order. In this study, I link Althusser's conception of political practice to Krauss's notion of recursivity through two case studies. The first is Michael Asher's Santa

---

<sup>17</sup> Louis Althusser, 'On the Materialist Dialectic', in *For Marx* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 178.

Monica Museum of Art installation of 2009, in which the artist re-installed proxies of all the temporary wall frames ever erected within the site. The second is the exhibition 'Voids: A Retrospective', in which installations drawn from art history that exhibited empty gallery spaces, were re-staged in (2009) within the galleries of the Pompidou Centre. I claim that both shows perform recursive readings of the museum spaces themselves as architectural constructions of emptiness. I argue that both installations share the care in reading that Althusser identified with Lenin's reference to the ideological frameworks in which he acted, and which he sought to transform, re-circulating histories of artistic and curatorial practice as exemplars of current convention, so as to critically frame them.

The project is presented here in two volumes. This volume, Volume One, focuses upon the development of my practice throughout the course of the PhD project and examines the public exhibitions and studio installations I have made over the course of the study, contextualising these in relation to my art-historical research and my engagement with contemporary practice. This is divided into chapters corresponding to the six relevant academic years – 2007/8, 2008/9, 2009/10, 2010/11, and 2011/13, the period after the examination of my initial submission. Volume Two is the aforementioned art-historical study examining the development of practices of architectural intervention.

### Year One (2007/8)

Prior to upgrading from the MPhil at the end of my first year, I focused upon developing installations based upon my own experiences with Barnett Newman paintings. I created a project that sought to test Newman's conception of his paintings as vehicles for audience members to investigate their own individual existence. This culminated in the installation *Building an Image*, presented as part of a group show in a vacant warehouse in Holbeck, Leeds, and 'Build Up', a solo exhibition at The Bowery, a white cube space in Headingley, Leeds. Working in these two contrasting spaces allowed me to consider how contexts of presentation condition the reception of works of art, and undertaking these projects informed the subsequent development of the project towards a more explicit focus upon site-specific art and architectural intervention.

The term 'self' played a key role in the initial formulation of my project as I considered how this term had influenced the development of modernist painting in the 1950s. I focused upon Barnett Newman's contribution towards the development of colour field painting and his aim for his work to stimulate in viewers a heightened awareness of their own presence before the painting, causing them to reflect upon where their own awareness of their presence originated. I engaged with his oeuvre in relation to Merleau-Ponty's notion that the basis of perception and the origin of subjectivity lies in our bodily intertwining with our environment:

It is as though our vision were formed within the heart of the visible [...] and yet it is not possible that we blend into it, nor that it passes into us, for then the vision would vanish at the moment of its formation, by disappearance of the seer or the visible.<sup>18</sup>

I drew correlations between this notion of intertwining and the quality of viewers' encounters before Newman's paintings. Newman's paintings are usually interpreted as vehicles by which viewers might reflect upon their own bodily existence. Yve-Alain Bois describes the experience of viewing a Newman painting as being immersed within a 'vibrating ocean of violent colour, never able to survey the whole and yet forced to

---

<sup>18</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p.130.

acknowledge its existence.<sup>19</sup> I decided that I wanted to work in response to this interpretation, and I started by viewing two Newman paintings, *Adam* (1951-2) (Fig. 1) and *Eve* (1950) (Fig. 2). Both paintings represented strong early examples of Newman's mature practice and are on permanent display in the UK at Tate Modern.



Fig. 1, Barnett Newman, *Adam*, oil on canvas, 238 x 172 cm, Tate Gallery, London, UK, 1951-2



Fig. 2, Barnett Newman, *Eve*, oil on canvas, 243 x 202.9 cm, Tate Gallery, London, UK, 1950

I made two trips to Tate Modern and I wrote an analysis of my encounter before *Adam* and *Eve* and made sketches recording my experiences before the work (Fig. 3), which I found helped me to clarify the various qualities of the encounter to myself. I followed Newman's advice that his paintings worked best from up close, and from this distance the paintings appeared as fields of colour of indeterminate depth. Before the works I felt as though I were situated within these fields, and at certain moments my vision appeared to range forth into a seemingly endless space, whilst at others the colour field appeared to rise up and subsume me.

<sup>19</sup> Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, eds., *art since 1900: modernism, antimodernism, postmodernism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), p. 365.

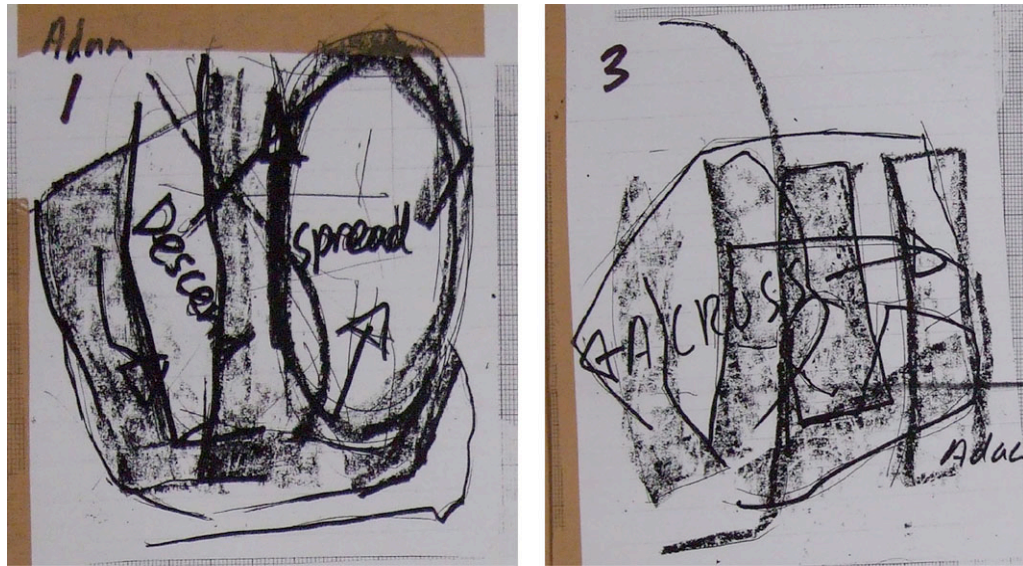


Fig. 3, Andy Broadey, *Sketches made before Adam (1951-2), and Eve (1950)*, Barnett Newman, pencil on paper, 10 x 10 cm, 2008

I felt that my own vision and the field of colour were locked within a dynamic tension – something akin to the primordial relation of resistance Merleau-Ponty diagnosed between each individual's intentional states and the environment that they perceive.<sup>20</sup> For Merleau-Ponty the seer is completely intimate with the world yet separated from it by the fact of his own awareness. For Merleau-Ponty this resistance is characterised by a blind spot where perceiver and perceived environment interlink. 'What it does not see is what makes it see, is its tie to being.'<sup>21</sup> Newman's paintings seemed to facilitate my awareness of how my own vision worked. Not only did I see the paintings, but my appreciation of them made me aware of how my vision intertwined with the colour field. This experience reflected Newman's aims for his paintings:

To me, the sense of place not only has a mystery but has that sense of metaphysical fact. I have come to distrust the episodic, and I hope that my painting has the impact of giving someone, as it did me, the feeling of his own totality, of his own separateness, of his own individuality.<sup>22</sup>

In 1952 Newman created a painting called *Onement I* (Fig. 4) that he considered to be a

<sup>20</sup> Merleau-Ponty, p. 219.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 248. Merleau-Ponty's point is that as embodied, perceiving subjects we can only comprehend our existence through our perceptual immersion. Just as there is a blind spot where the optic nerve joins the retina, we are unable to perceive what generates our perception.

<sup>22</sup> Barnett Newman, 'Interview with David Sylvester', in *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. by Benjamin Buchloh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 257.

breakthrough. It was a brown rectilinear colour field cut by a thin centrally positioned orange field running from the top to the bottom of the painting. He believed that the work no longer filled or manipulated space; rather, it 'declared it', allowing viewers to gain a heightened awareness of their own individual manifestation within a spatial field.<sup>23</sup> The painting is a field that is symmetrically split by a vertical line that Bois notes is 'co-extensive with the field to which it refers and which it measures and declares for the beholder'.<sup>24</sup> Newman considered that works such as *Onement I* allowed the beholder to reflexively meditate on the totality of their own presence before the work.



Fig. 4, Barnett Newman, *Onement I*, oil on masking tape on canvas, 69.2 x 41.2cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1948

The sense of wholeness that Newman expected viewers to experience before his paintings contrasted with my own perception of the paintings in the Tate. It seemed to

<sup>23</sup> Barnett Newman, 'Frontiers of Space', Interview with Dorothy Gees Seckler', in *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 249.

<sup>24</sup> Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), p. 193.



me that the attempts of my own perceptual faculties to project order into the ambiguous scenario before me, and the continual stream of perceptual data offered by the painting, seemed to generate an appearance of transmutation that was comprised of contrasting visual illusions. In this dynamic scenario, in which my brain attempted to read the image in one way and then another, the role that pre-conceived notions of height, width, depth, and graduations of hue play in ordering visual perceptions, became tangible. Whilst I had found myself drawn into a contemplative engagement with the illusory space of the colour field, upon analysis my experience seemed to be structured through socially determined oppositions of linguistic convention. I wanted to get away from such illusions of wholeness, and wanted to find a way of representing the fragmentary nature of my own experiences before the work. To do this I decided that I needed to work within the actual space of social relations through installation. This realisation also set in train my engagement with the social construction of experiences of architectural space that informed my later practice.

I explored how sequentially transmutating arrangements of lines and overlaying of multiple frames might figure the animated and inter-articulated nature of my experiences before the Newman paintings. I turned the linear drawings into Letratone collages, which allowed me to articulate the contrasting textures I had experienced before Newman's works (Figs. 5, 6, 7, 8). I identified the two drawings that best corresponded to my experience of the paintings and developed them into room-sized wooden constructions. In order to reflect the fragmentary and dynamic nature of my experiences, I decided to use old wooden pallets as they carried associations with transportation, whilst, in order to represent the provisional nature of the momentary perception recorded in the drawings, I attached the pallets with G-clamps rather than screws or nails (Fig. 9).

I decided to create an installation that used the whole of my studio. I wanted this new work to force my audience to navigate it by forming paths between the timber frames. I installed three structures developed in relation to my collages and formed out of disassembled pallet planks attached to frames. I separated out different compositional elements of the collages and attributed each to one of three frames, which then radiated out from the centre of my studio, reaching back towards the corners of the room. Audience members were then faced with three or four frames attempting to function as

a singular work. These could be looked into like a painting, or walked around, into or behind like a sculpture (Fig. 10). In order to emphasise the provisional nature of the perceptions recorded in the drawings, I distributed maquettes of the larger structures throughout the installation, which were formed out of similar pre-fabricated components. I placed them before buckets that I filled with mirrors, so that when the audience looked into these buckets, their own image was reflected back at them merged with the image of the maquettes (Fig. 11).

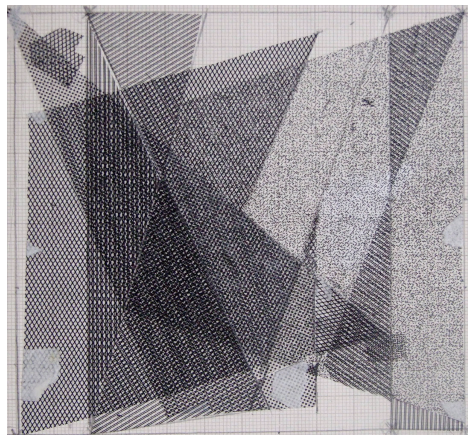


Fig. 5, Andy Broadey, *Adam*, (1951-2),  
Letratone Collage 12 x 12 cm, 2008

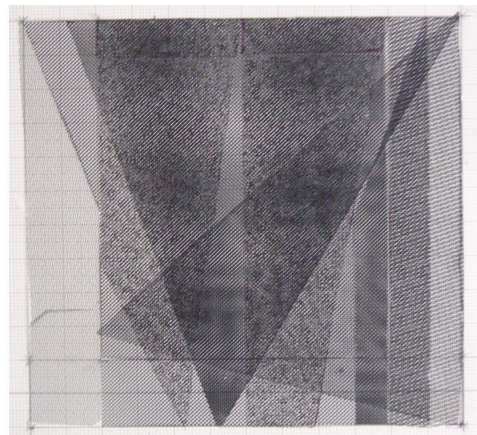


Fig. 6, Andy Broadey, *Eve*, (1950),  
Letratone Collage, 12 x 12 cm, 2008

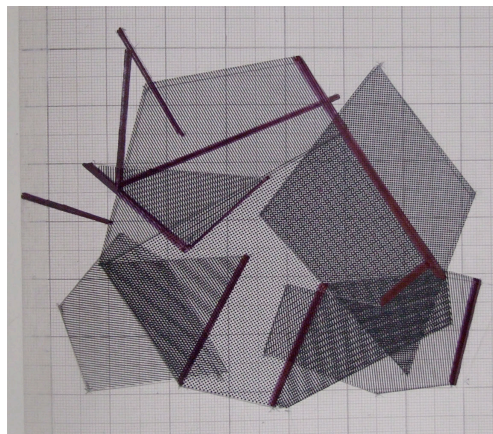


Fig. 7, Andy Broadey, *Adam*, (1951-2),  
Letratone collage, 15 x 15 cm, 2008

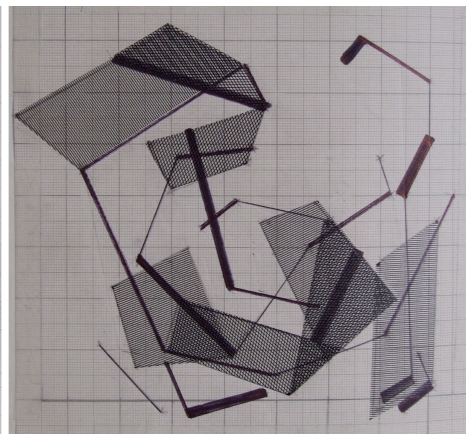


Fig. 8, Andy Broadey, *Eve*, (1950),  
Letratone collage, 15 x 15 cm, 2008



Fig. 9, Andy Broadey, *Adam* (1951-2) studio installation, wood (various types), cardboard and clamps, 350 x 200 x 200 cm, 2008



Fig. 10, Andy Broadey, *'Adam' and 'Eve'* studio installation, wood (various types), cardboard, clamps, mirrors, metal buckets and photocopies, 350 x 350 x 200 cm, 2008



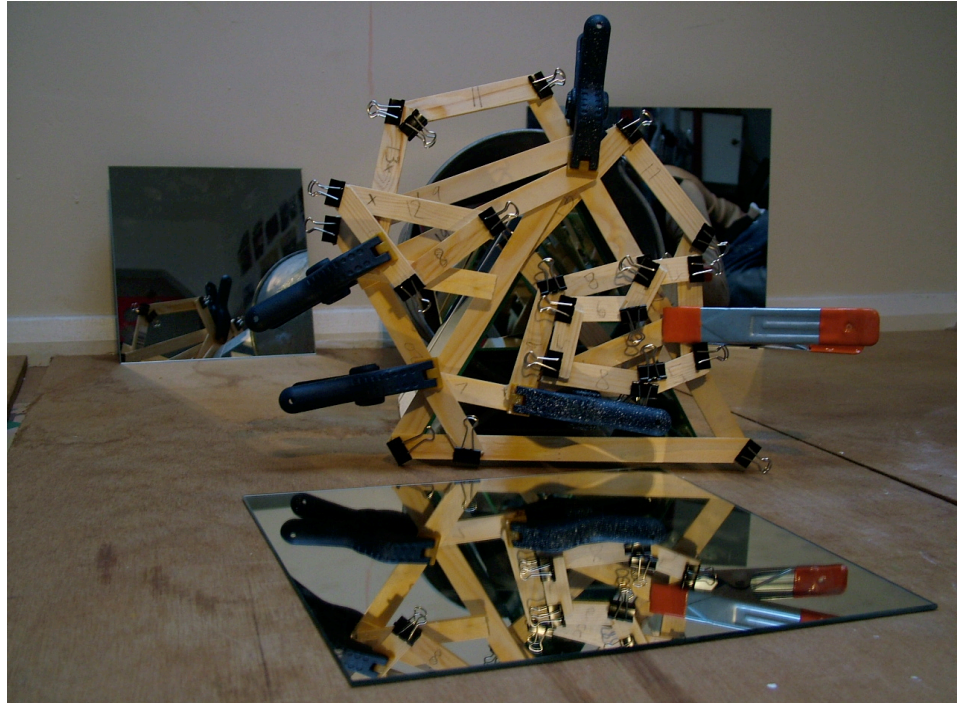


Fig. 11, Andy Broadey, 'Adam' and 'Eve' maquettes, studio installation, wood (various types), cardboard, clamps, mirrors, metal buckets and photocopies, 100 x 100 x 50 cm, 2008

After creating this studio-based installation I went on to develop the piece, now called *Building an Image* (2008) (Fig. 12) in a vacant factory space as part of the exhibition, 'Separations'. Responding to this space provided another opportunity to explore the site-responsive nature of my emerging practice. I arranged the frame structures so that one faced the audience as they approached it and the other four faced the central clear area in a circular arrangement.



Fig. 12, Andy Broadey, *Building an Image*, wood, cardboard, clamps, mirrors, metal buckets and photocopies, 800 x 500 x 300 cm, 2008

In August 2008 I was offered the opportunity to present a variation on the piece from 'Separations' in The Bowery, a white cube gallery in Headingley, Leeds. I made two intersecting cuboid frame structures in the gallery and used these as armatures on which to make arrangements of planks drawn from two of the frame structures from *Building an Image*. Over the summer I gave further consideration to the importance of shape in Newman's paintings, which, Judd notes, are 'whole and not part of another whole. Everything is specifically where it is'.<sup>25</sup> I became interested in the role previous experiences played in my visual recognition of the rectilinear components of Newman's

<sup>25</sup> Donald Judd, 'Barnett Newman', *Studio International*, 179:919 (1970), 67-9, p. 67.

works, in particular Merleau-Ponty's observation that

a shape is not only the sum of present data, for these latter call up other complementary ones. When I say that I have before me a red patch, the meaning of the word patch is provided by previous experiences which have taught me to use the word.<sup>26</sup>

I decided to try and figure the layers of previous experience that informed my engagement with the Newman paintings by introducing drifts of rectangular frames piled up in the far corners of the gallery. In keeping with this theme, I called the piece *Build Up* (Fig 13).

With these two installations, my focus fell squarely upon the references that these installations made to the Newman paintings, yet in retrospect it was possible to see that the space itself set the conditions under which the work was received. In fact, these arrangements of pallets activated the factory space in a way that was consistent with its historical function. I realised that the focus of my research needed to shift towards site-specific art.

---

<sup>26</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 17.



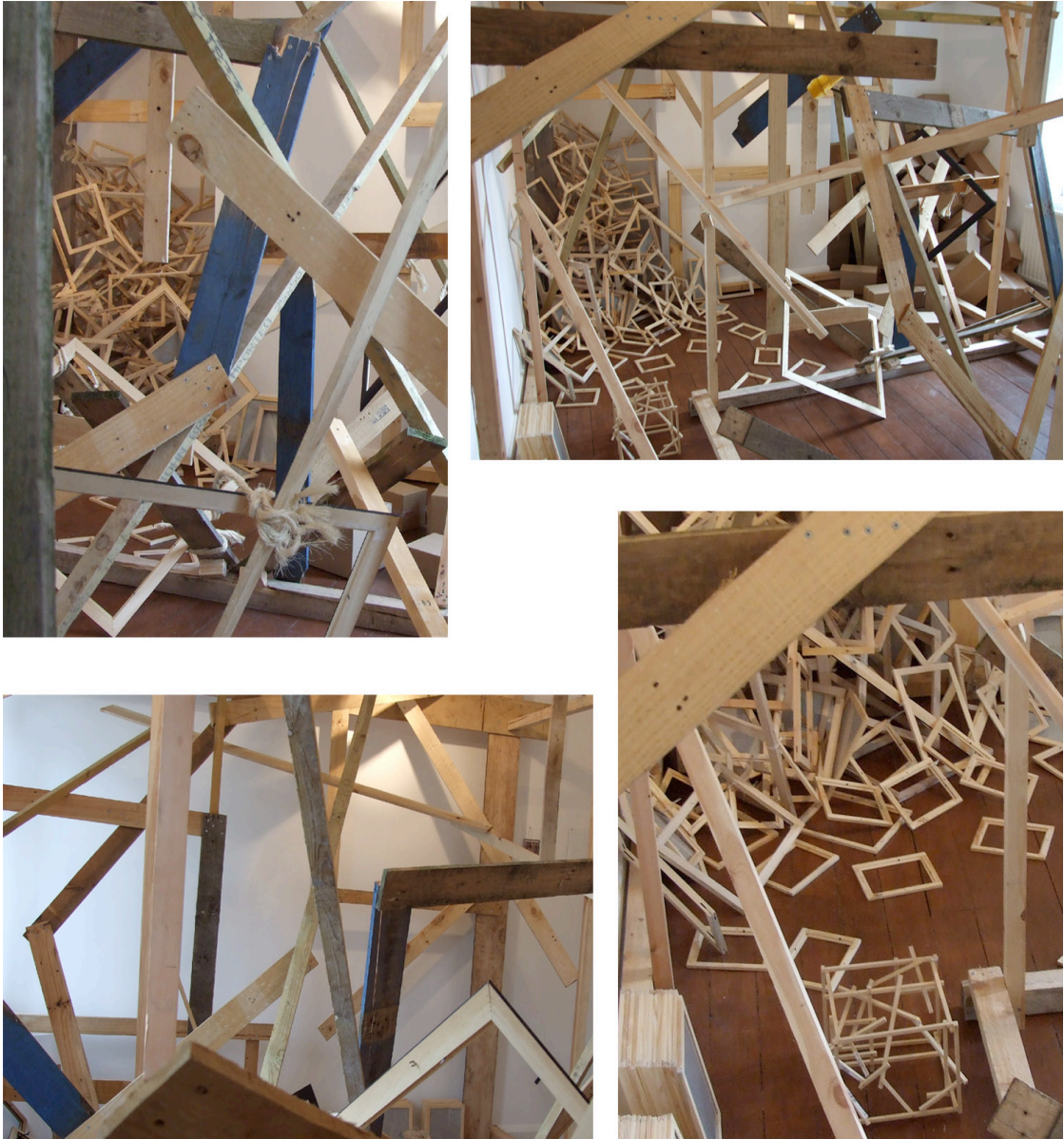


Fig. 13, Andy Broadey, *Build Up*, wood (various types), cardboard, 500 x 300 x 250 cm, 2008

### **Year Two (2008/9)**

Having worked in a vacant factory and a white cube gallery over the summer of 2008, I began to think more directly about the relationship between my work and the places in which I present it. Whilst *Building an Image* and *Build Up* referenced my experiences of Newman's paintings, they also addressed architectural environments. Upon reflection I decided that I could produce more focused work by synthesising these two aspects of my practice – working more directly in relation to architectural space by appropriating the approaches of the artists responsible for historical developments in the field of architectural intervention. These developments informed projects that I initiated in the second year, and onwards into the third year of my study. My focus fell on the conventional nature of architectural production, behaviour within architectural space, and the practice of architectural intervention itself. By appropriating and re-combining these conventional practices I hoped to produce works that added or substituted materials and objects from particular architectural spaces, creating hybrid environments that conflated different kinds of architectural structure with different kinds of site-specific manipulation.

In light of these considerations, the question of how exhibition sites function and condition viewer responses rose to prominence within my project. I decided to address these issues in my practice by combining conceptions and techniques developed by practitioners who helped to shape the field of architectural intervention in order to manipulate the physical and functional structures of contemporary architectural sites. By transforming sites in this manner I intended to draw the attention of audiences to the possibilities of architectural organisation and the meanings and functions that these might embody. By interacting with the altered sites my hope was that audiences would be drawn into unfamiliar modes of behaviour and become conscious of their own responses.

I researched how the histories of practice and conventions of display shaped the work of other contemporary artists. I studied Ryan Gander's 2009 Ikon Gallery exhibition 'Heralded as the New Black' (Fig. 14). Here Gander arranged objects, texts, images, diagrams, and films that developed narratives around historical practices and their canonisation, linking factual research and fictional narratives constructed by



Gander himself. The artist used the power that mounting a public exhibition afforded him to forge new ways of interpreting and responding to histories of practice, highlighting how particular examples and interpretations dominate and block the invention of alternatives. Similarly, Jonathan Monk considers how individual acts of production and interpretation are shaped within a field of historical influences. Monk locates his practice in previously unidentified possibilities in the work of 1960s and 1970s conceptual art, often in relation to his environment and personal remembrances.

The artists I deal with are ever present... I find loop holes and follow them. For instance my work *None of the buildings on Sunset Strip*, 1997: it refers to Ed Rusha's seminal artist's book *Every building on Sunset Strip* [fig 15] from 1966 and you can also see it as *all of the streets that lead away from Ed Rusha*.<sup>27</sup>

Monk emphasises how historical distance from these artworks creates a space of re-interpretation and a potential for re-use. The artist's 2005 ICA exhibition 'Continuous project altered daily' applied this citational approach to the curation of his work. Each day he moved, removed or added displays to his own retrospective as a homage to Robert Morris's project of the same name.



Fig. 14, Ryan Gander, 'Heralded as the New Black' (installation view), mixed media, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK, 2008

<sup>27</sup> Jonathan Monk, quoted in Stephan Berg, *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, etc* (Hannover: Kunstverein, 2006), p. 133.



Fig. 15, Jonathan Monk, pages from the book, *None of the buildings on Sunset Strip*, artist's book, softcover with dust jacket, 20.5 x 15.5 cm

I also studied practitioners who referenced histories of practice to develop responses to architectural spaces. Mike Nelson's *Triple Bluff Canyon* (2004) (Fig. 16), re-contextualised Robert Smithson's earthwork *Partially Buried Woodshed* (1974) (Fig. 17) in MOMA Oxford, transforming the gallery into a desert containing a shack similar to the one featured in Smithson's piece. Monika Sosnowska's installation *Loop* (2007) (Fig. 18), in the Kunst Museum Liechtenstein, combines forms of installation practice and architectural organisation to create a set of sculptural manipulations of the museum's 'white-cube' gallery spaces that echo constructivist and minimalist formal languages. The work manipulates the blank white spaces of the gallery that audiences usually traverse without noticing, into a set of corridors that perpetually wrap around the viewer as they move through the space. Sosnowska's intervention transformed the audience's encounter with the museum's interior architecture into a perpetually looping movement through a compressed, transitional space, offering an experience of approaching a continuously deferred destination.



Fig. 16, Mike Nelson, *Triple Bluff Canyon* (installation view), MOMA Oxford, UK, 2004



Fig. 17, Robert Smithson, *Partially Buried Woodshed*, earthwork, Kent State University, Ohio, USA, 1970

With my own practice, I decided to work in relation to site-specific practices theorised within Rosalind Krauss's essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' (1978).<sup>28</sup> Krauss attributed the development of various forms of site-specific art to the examination of the productive possibilities offered by dismantling the opposition between modernist sculptures and the sites of their presentation, producing three-dimensional works such as those that featured in Robert Morris's 1964 Green Gallery (Fig. 19) installation. Krauss felt this could only be described as 'what is in the room that is not really the room', and that it generated a new category, 'not-architecture', based on the negation of modernist sculpture.<sup>29</sup> I was particularly interested in the category of 'axiomatic structures', or interventions made within architectural spaces, that Krauss felt was generated through the synthesis of the categories of not-architecture and architecture. An example is the practice of Michael Asher, who reconfigures the architecture and displays of museums, to critique how these architectural spaces determine engagements with artworks. In the Art Institute of Chicago, Asher moved Jean Antoine Houdon's sculpture of George Washington from the main entrance to the gallery of eighteenth century European art (Fig. 20) and placed leaflets within the concurrent 73<sup>rd</sup> American exhibition explaining that this was his contribution to the group show of contemporary art. The work drew attention to how the gallery used the Houdon sculpture to establish its own status and that of American national heritage in general.

<sup>28</sup> Rosalind Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', in *Modern Sculpture Reader*, ed. by David Hulks, Alex Potts and Jon Wood (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007), pp. 333-342.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Because such interventions disrupt the existing organisation of the sites in which they are presented in order to comment upon the site's socio-political status, the intervention acts as an interpretative aid. Craig Owens considers that such site-specific works act as allegories. Owens understands allegorical structure as 'one text...read through another, however fragmentary, intermittent or chaotic their relationship might be; the paradigm for the allegorical work is the palimpsest.'<sup>30</sup> For Owens it is the structural relation of site-specific works – such as Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (Fig. 21) – to the context in which they are produced, that makes them allegorical.



Fig. 18, Monika Sosnowska, *Loop*, installation photograph, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, 2007

---

<sup>30</sup> Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse', in *Art in Theory 1900-2000*, ed. by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (London: Blackwells, 2003), p. 1026.



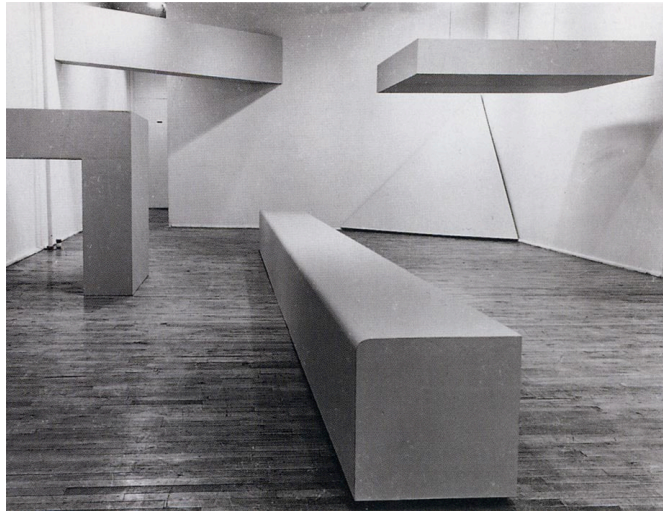


Fig. 19, Robert Morris, 'Installation in the Green Gallery', seven geometric plywood structures painted grey, Green Gallery, New York, USA, 1964



Fig. 20, Michael Asher, *Installation made on the occasion of the 73rd American Exhibition*, the Art Institute of Chicago, USA, 1979



Fig. 21, Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, earthwork, at Rozel Point, Box Elder County, Utah, USA, 1970

I decided to develop my own responses to architectural spaces through close examination of the historical development of architectural intervention, a decision that also led to the development of this study's dissertation component. Like the artists who formed the framework of contemporary practice with which I was engaged, I worked through an intensive engagement with practices that shaped the field of architectural intervention. I focused upon the architectural components of gallery spaces, such as white walls, polished floors and spot lighting, and decided to make works that disrupt these, confounding the expectations of visitors and forcing them to critically re-negotiate their habitual patterns of engagement with the gallery spaces. I developed two projects in the second year of my study: *From wall to floor* and *Day Room*.

*From wall to floor* developed out of an engagement with Carl Andre's floor-based sculptures, such as *144 Magnesium Square* (1969) (Fig. 22). The sculpture combines prefabricated metal tiles into modular grid structures on the gallery floor and can be visually experienced, and/or walked on. Upon encountering the work, you simultaneously see the metal grid spread out underneath you, and feel the tiles underfoot. Andre forces his audience to consider their engagement with the horizontal plane underfoot as an alternative to their habitual focus upon objects that vertically bisect their perceptual field. I envisaged a work that removed the white walls of a gallery and moved them to the floor in equal square portions, to create a set of floor tiles. I wanted to lay these informally in a pile over the whole floor surface of the gallery in an uneven, interlocking structure. The density of the pile would act as an indicator of the ratio between the surface area of the floor and the surface area of the walls, whilst over the course of the exhibition the tiles would break or shift into new configurations under the body weight of viewers as they moved around the space. I trialled the piece in my studio by cutting a set of wallpapered chipboard floor tiles equivalent to the surface area of my studio's walls (Fig. 23).



Fig. 22, Carl Andre, *144 Magnesium Square*, magnesium tiles, collection of the Tate Gallery, 366 x 366 x 1 cm.

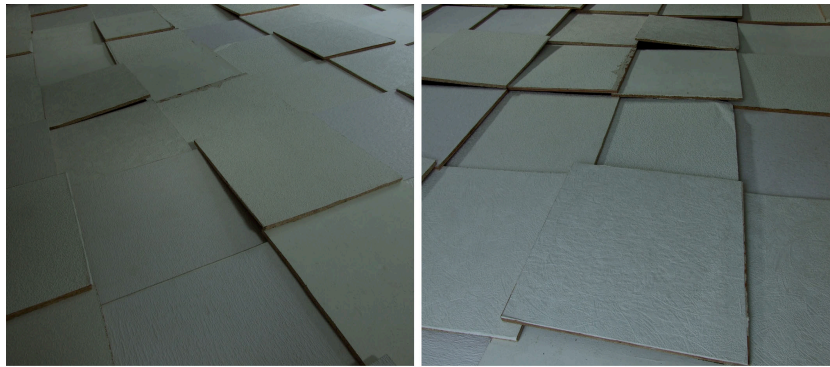


Fig. 23, Andy Broadey, *From Wall to Floor*, studio installation, chipboard and wallpaper, 2009

*Day Room* developed as a contribution to the Institute of Communications Studies 3rd Annual International PhD Conference, at the University of Leeds in 2009. I developed the installation through an engagement with installations developed by Michael Asher and Dan Graham that minimally intervened within gallery architecture so as to confront viewers with their own presence in these empty spaces. In a similar vein *Day Room* created a clone gallery within the refreshments area of the conference that set up an area for rest and contemplation (Fig. 24) within this busy space of social interaction (Fig. 25), whilst also drawing attention to how traditional gallery displays are used to define and delineate art. Its situation inside the University's Business School also raised issues of expectation and behaviour, as the audience adapted its behaviour according to different situations and architectural constructs. Moving through the exhibition space, from refreshments, through corridors, and into the temporary gallery, the audience was drawn to consider their responses and how these were informed or conditioned by these differing zones.



Fig. 24, Andy Broadey, *Day Room* (installation view), installation presented on the occasion of the 3rd Annual International Postgraduate Conference: 'The Politics and Policies of Communications: National, Transnational and Global Perspectives', University of Leeds, UK, 2009.



Fig. 25, Andy Broadey, *Day Room* (exterior view), installation presented on the occasion of the 3rd Annual International Postgraduate Conference: 'The Politics and Policies of Communications: National, Transnational and Global Perspectives', University of Leeds, UK, 2009.



The work presented within the gallery was a photographic reconstruction of the basic constituents of my four-metre-square studio – materiality, light conditions and the passage of time. The surface area of the studio walls were subdivided into a grid corresponding to standard photo sizes and photographed over the course of a day. The photos were affixed onto the walls of this temporary structure using the original grid formation, bringing the battered wood-chip decoration and institutional fittings of my studio into stark contrast with the clean white gallery walls. The resulting display of photographs transposed the changing appearance of the surface area of my studio (the space of production) during that single day onto the gallery (the space of display). The gallery structure created a space for rest and contemplation, accessed through a doorway positioned on one side of the piece. A perimeter of corridors through which the gallery was accessed ran around it, creating transitional spaces of movement between the refreshments area and gallery space. The contrast between the original production space, the artificial gallery space, the refreshment zone and the overall context of the Business School, drew the audience's attention to their own reactions to both the art and the spaces through which they moved.

*Day Room* and *From wall to floor* draw upon site-specific practices that investigate architectural space and that critique the institutional presentation of art. They use the typical 'white cube' gallery context, and that of the artist's studio, to examine the importance of such forms and conventions in determining the status of artworks. By turning the architectural conventions of gallery display into a set of mobile forms that are re-constructed within the context of an educational establishment, *Day Room* emphasises their capacity to demarcate spaces for sculptural contemplation. Various qualities of architectural space are brought to the attention of audiences as they navigate the exterior and interior spaces of the work. These different attributes create a context in which particular modes of architectural production are questioned and become objects of contemplative examination. Similarly, *From wall to floor* demonstrates the function of the walls and floor of white cube spaces and how these functions correlate with how we approach and interact with these sites. Like many contemporary installation artists, I developed these pieces through a sustained engagement with the work of practitioners who shaped the field of architectural intervention. I resolved to subsequently explore the impact of canonical works upon contemporary modes of practice and display, and I also

sought to develop connections between conventions of exhibition making and the stuff of our everyday experiences.

### Year Three (2009/10)

Having constructed and taken apart white cube spaces in the second year of my study, in the third year I sought to further investigate how such exhibition sites condition viewer responses and facilitate the diversification of forms of art and the ways in which these are displayed. Working on *Day Room* had brought photography into my practice, and this year I sought to make further connections between the architectural components of white cube galleries and modes of photographic representation. Each of this year's projects used an art gallery's display conditions to draw visitors into contemplative modes of interaction with objects and architectural spaces that would not usually be the focus of artistic appreciation. The role that the gallery played in framing the mundane and everyday was thus foregrounded and audience members were drawn to question their own responses and how they are influenced by the architectural space that they enter.

Victor Burgin's 'Situational Aesthetics' (1969), was an important reference point in the development of these projects.<sup>31</sup> Burgin described a shift towards artworks that integrated the production of objects with the communication of a message. He noted that site-specific works, such as Michael Asher's, were structured in relation to the physical aspects of the situation and the psychological experience of the viewer, and he also identified these works with an examination of 'situational cues', such as white walls, spot lighting and exhibition signage, that signified to visitors the establishment of an exhibition context.<sup>32</sup>

The third year began, then, with the production of a second version of *Day Room*, this one comprising two versions, the first produced in my studio during the 2009 summer solstice (Fig. 26) and the second, made in the same space during the 2009 winter solstice (Fig. 27), which were intended to be displayed together, either opposite or adjacent to one another. The contrast between the two would emphasize how ambient light conditions within my studio change throughout the year, and also draw attention to the global position of my studio.

---

<sup>31</sup> Victor Burgin, 'Situational Aesthetics', in Harrison and Wood, eds., *Art in Theory*, pp. 894-896.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 895.

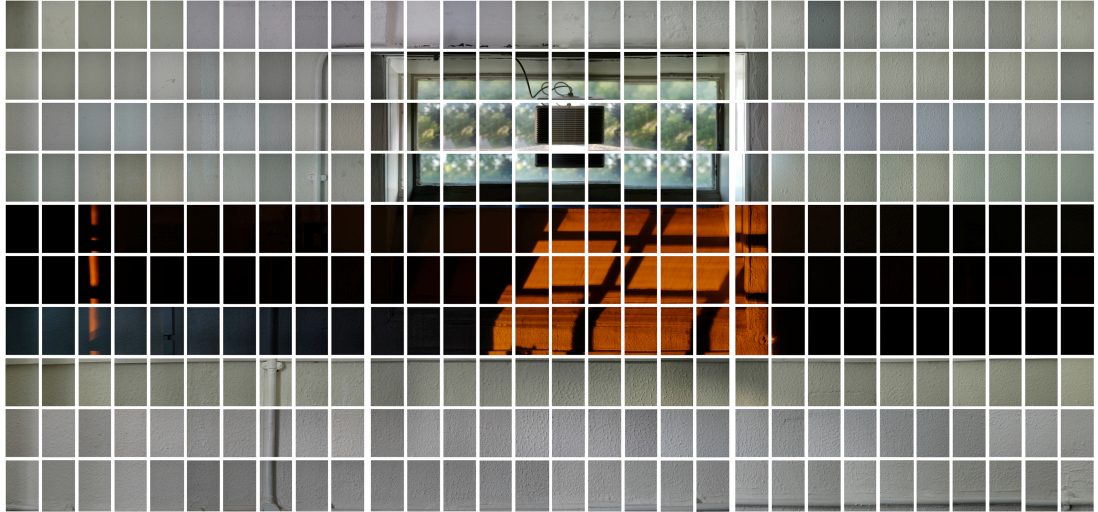


Fig. 26, Andy Broadey, *Day Room Summer Solstice 2009*, (walls three and two), 1200 6 x 4 inch digital photographs; gallery walls, 244 x 366 cm, 2009

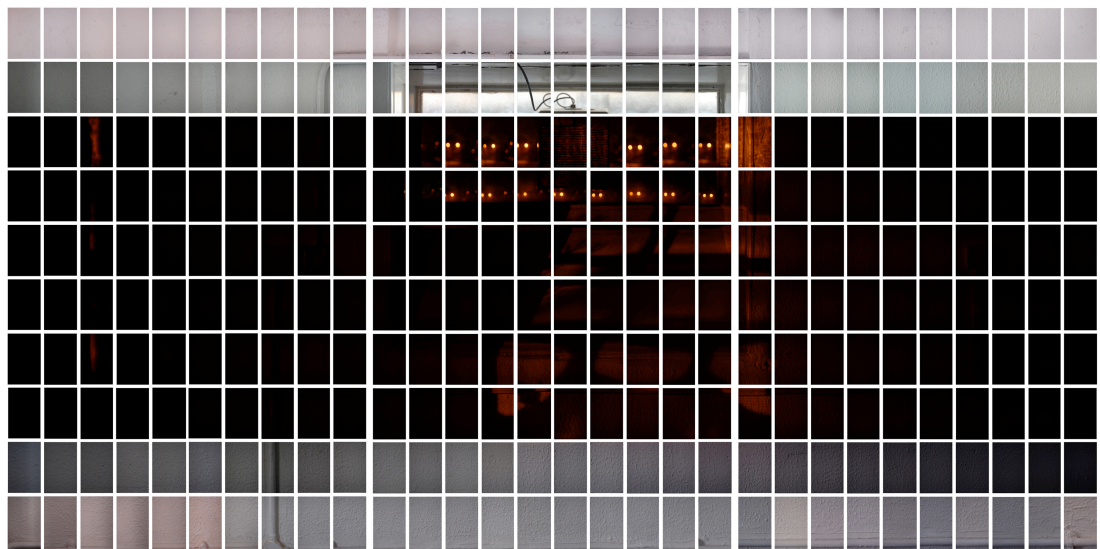
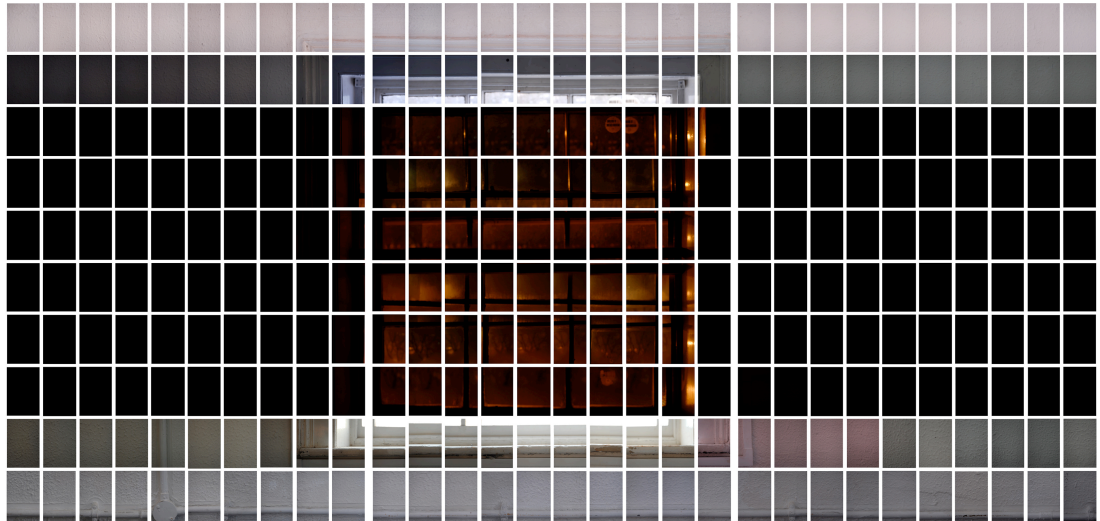


Fig. 27, Andy Broadey, *Day Room Winter Solstice 2009*, (walls two and three), 1200 6 x 4 inch digital photographs; gallery walls, 244 x 366 cm, 2009.

In February 2010 I was offered the opportunity to exhibit in a group show, 'Instinct', in a vacant shop unit in Sheffield. I developed a work entitled *Carousel* (Fig. 28) that re-staged the ritual of the family slide show within the gallery, enabling visitors to re-negotiate their relationship with the near-obsolete technology of photographic slides and to consider its enduring importance in the remembrance of past events. The work uses my own family's photo collection. This archive documents various events in the development of my family – my parents' marriage, my sister's birth and then my own, assorted Christmas festivities, package holidays to Corfu and Benidorm. The full archive also plots a history of photographic technology: over time, it shifts from photographic slides to 6x4 paper prints and subsequently to digital files. *Carousel*, however, focuses upon the period documented by slides. My parents stopped making slides in 1982, yet the events documented here continue to be relevant to how we negotiate relationships within the family. As the events become more remote, our memories of them blur, and the way they are framed by the camera becomes an increasingly important memory aid. As a result, our memories of particular formative experiences become ever more dependent upon 35mm slide projection – a technology that is increasingly seen as disconnected with contemporary life, obsolete, a relic.

*Carousel* emphasises this tension. The installation consists of one room, five plinths, five 35mm slide projectors, five slide carousels – each with a capacity of eighty slides - and one hundred and forty slides from my parents' family photo collection. The piece is constructed by arranging the plinths in a line parallel to the wall and by placing the projectors on the plinths. The plinths and projectors are set-up so that the images half-overlay one another, creating a continuous montage, and so that the slides click onwards every eight seconds, creating a changing sequence. Twenty-eight montages then span the period from 1968 to 1982, as documented by slide photography. The period from 1982 to the present day remains blank. As slide carousels rotated, due to the ageing mechanics of the projectors, the work falls steadily out of sequence and the carefully ordered events become mixed up. The projections, now dissociated from their original chronology, begin to function as a random survey of the entire time period, as the wall of the gallery becomes a site of endless combinations of imagery. The show runs for an hour at a time, before the projectors are reset.



*Carousel* uses situational cues within a gallery context to structure an examination of our relationship with slide technology and to draw audience members into an examination of how family photography influences our remembrance of past events. By creating montages using slide projections, and by allowing the work's chronology to progressively degrade, the installation uses the gallery walls as a site upon which to stage these remembrances.



Fig. 28, Andy Broadey *Carousel Montage 7, 9 and 11*, 5 35mm slides, slide projectors, 5 plinths, gallery wall, variable dimensions, 2010.

*Display* (Figs. 29.1, 29.2) is a series of photographs of perspex leaflet holders that emphasise how photographic displays within art galleries focus our attention onto the objects they depict. The project comprises two sets of six 18x12 inch Diasc-mounted photographs, presented on the walls of an art gallery. The photographs feature twenty-one A4 and A5 size leaflet holders, displayed upon twenty-one plinths and arranged in different configurations in each photograph. The two sets of photographs are made from the same configurations of plinths and leaflet holders, and differ only in terms of the light conditions under which they were photographed. Different arrangements were produced by swapping the positions of the fourteen leaflet holders. For each photograph, I attempted to create a symmetrical arrangement, similar to those created in places such as libraries and college foyers. As the studio flash illuminated the highly reflective leaflet holders, it created shadows and reflections that rendered some surfaces visible, whilst leaving others transparent. Where light reflects from the leaflet holders they form into a screen across the picture plane. This creates a tension in each photograph between depth of field (constructed by the receding arrangement), and the flat surface of the photograph (emphasised by the accumulation of transparent plastic surfaces). The presentation of the prints under Diasc gives each photographic unit a physicality, the quality of which correlates with the objects that it depicts.



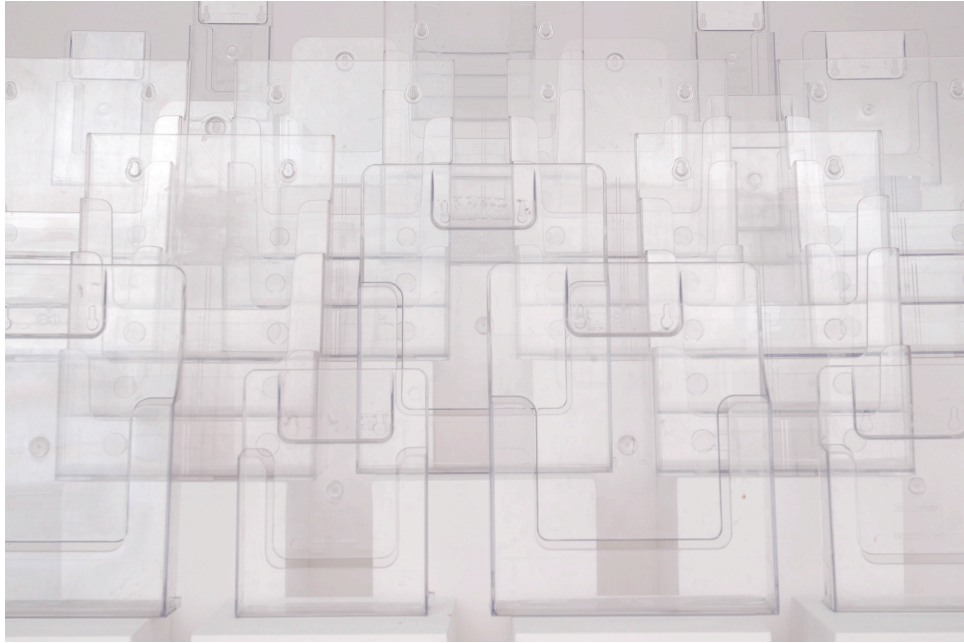


Fig. 29.1, Andy Broadey, *Display*, photograph 7 from a series of 12, Diassec-mounted inkjet print onto fuji satin paper, 18 x 12 inches, 2010



Fig. 29.2, Andy Broadey, *Display*, photograph 9 from a series of 12, Diassec-mounted inkjet print onto fuji satin paper, 18 x 12 inches, 2010

The re-contextualisation of the leaflet holders within an art gallery transforms objects that usually make information available in institutional spaces into objects of contemplative attention in their own right. However, this act of re-contextualisation also draws attention to the capacity of modes of display, such as photographic framing and clean white walls, to transform the way we engage with these objects. Standing before these photographs, hung on the walls of an art gallery, audiences must consider why they are being drawn to engage with them as art, whilst simultaneously examining how they engage with such leaflet holders beyond the gallery context.

During the summer of 2010 I was offered the opportunity to display six of these photographs in the exhibition 'Philosophy in Practice' at De Brakke Grond in Amsterdam as part of the International Deleuze Studies Conference, 2010 (Fig. 30).



Fig. 30, 'Philosophy in Practice' exhibition (installation view), De Brakke Grond, Amsterdam, Holland, 2010

Throughout the year I also developed *The Museum of Windows*, a project for which I used architectural planning to propose the redevelopment of urban spaces through synthesis of galleries from major historical and contemporary art museums with existing architectural structures. The project was initially developed for the exhibition in Holland: it proposed a set of glass galleries within key transportation hubs – container ports, railway stations – between Britain and Holland. The plans envisaged the production of stacks of cuboid exhibition spaces made out of glass at Hull and Zeebrugge ferry ports, offering travellers vantage points from which they could view ongoing activity on the port side (Fig. 31). I later re-developed the project for an exhibition in an artist-run space, the Bordesley Centre For Contemporary Art, in Birmingham. I was interested in how several vacant warehouses and factories in the Digbeth area have been transformed into sites for artistic appreciation. Project spaces like Ikon Eastside have appropriated features that are usually typical of white cube galleries (clean white walls, careful lighting systems) and these features give the otherwise non-traditional spaces the power to transform the objects they exhibit into art – in the same way that the Green and Dwan white cube galleries permitted us to view Carl Andre’s fire bricks and Dan Flavin’s fluorescent light-bulbs as art.

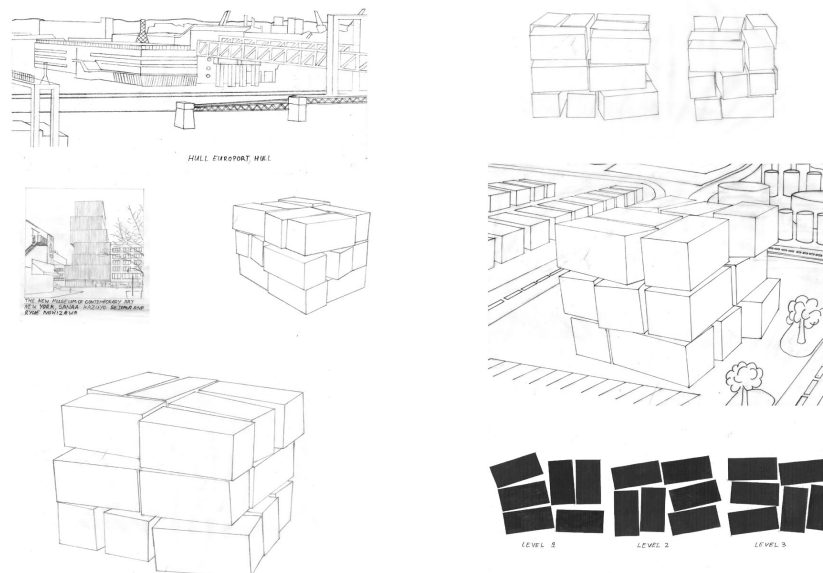


Fig. 31, Andy Broadey, *The Museum of Windows*, Hull Europort re-development plan, A1 plan print, 2010

I developed a project that tried to grasp the principles through which these transformations were enacted, taking them to their logical conclusion by proposing the conversion into exhibition space of as much architectural space as possible within Digbeth. I considered André Malraux's observation that in light of their social status, museums in the nineteenth century were able to metamorphose unlikely artefacts into objects of formal contemplation. I explored Malraux's anticipation that because of its uniform format, photography would further extend the public availability of these artefacts, homogenising the appearance of the objects and making it possible to consider the artefacts as works of art in a 'common style'.<sup>33</sup> Ten years later the homogenising backdrop of the white cube enabled minimalists to bring the material qualities and unitary structures of urban environments to the attention of art audiences. More recently, the white cube format has facilitated the development of new modes of artistic display, like artist-run spaces such as those in Digbeth and Bordesley, which, alongside art fairs, biennials and huge new art museums (the Pompidou Centre, Tate Modern), synthesise the visual appearance of the white cube model with other forms of architecture, homogenising diverse spaces around the function of art appreciation.

*The Museum of Windows* drew upon these developments to propose the production of five new art galleries in Digbeth (Fig. 32). These proposals combine the designs of white cube galleries from art museums around the world with industrial buildings around Digbeth that are currently empty. The museums that I chose also highlight different stages in the historical development of the white cube from its beginnings in the MFA Boston and MoMA New York, through its heyday with the North East Quadrant of Tate Britain and to its synthesis into new forms of museum with the warehouse conversion of Tate Liverpool and the sculptural structure of Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim.

The designs insert these white cube galleries into the vacant industrial buildings, and through processes of displacement, rotation, and stacking, they open out onto the surrounding industrial landscapes. This breaks down the separation of interior and exterior that informed the original designs, whilst achieving a new separation of gallery space from the interior of the original buildings and surrounding landscape. The designs frame Digbeth itself, focusing the attention of viewers onto the expanses of space that

---

<sup>33</sup> André Malraux, *The Voices of Silence* (London: Paladin, 1974), p. 13.

shape this landscape and the continual making and unmaking of buildings within it.

The exhibition itself comprised drawings for the proposed redevelopments presented on trestle tables that included archival imagery of the district, contemporary photographs of Digbeth, documentation of art museums, and architectural plans of the proposed designs for the galleries (Fig. 33). The trestles were arranged throughout the gallery. The back wall of the room was wallpapered with a design I developed using a chronology of adverts for factories based in Digbeth found in previous additions of the Yellow Pages, running back to the 1930s.

Throughout this year I developed projects that focused upon the conventions of gallery display that structure the white cube format, and contended with how these conventions were now being redeployed to form a continually expanding array of exhibition formats. I created a series of installations that frame everyday objects, such as leaflet holders and family photo collections, inside art galleries in ways that uncovered how these objects structure different aspects of our lives. Each of these projects sought to provide opportunities for members of my audience to become active interpreters of the situational cues that structure their engagements with art.



Fig. 32, Andy Broadey, a selection of plan prints featured in the exhibition, 'The Museum of Windows', the Bordesley Centre for Contemporary Art, Birmingham, UK, 2010.





Fig. 33, Andy Broadey, *The Museum of Windows*, (installation view) Bordesley Centre for Contemporary Art, Birmingham, UK, 2010.

### Year Four (2010/11)

In 2009/10, I developed a series of projects that deliberately staged familiar objects and situations – objects and situations that viewers might not otherwise consider to be art – within a white cube context, creating opportunities for the viewers to re-negotiate their established patterns of engagement and to question how their responses might be (re)conditioned by the gallery environment. In the fourth year of my project, my focus returned towards a more direct examination of the architectural structure of art galleries and how they condition viewer responses. This has led me to redevelop *Day Room* and produce a new work, *Shadow Box*, both of which I presented in Manchester in a solo exhibition in August 2011 at BLANKSPACE titled 'The View From Here' (2011), alongside *Display*. I also developed a site-specific installation, *Re-Model*, which I presented as part of the WaterTower ArtFest 2011 in Sofia, Bulgaria, in June 2011.

In the winter of 2010, I began investigating photography as a means to record the dynamics of light and space within white cube galleries, taking as my cue Gottfried Jager's discussion of a photographic methodology in which 'the photographic means [...] become[s] the object of photography. [...] Its works are pure photography: not abstractions of the real world, but concretions of the pictorial possibilities contained within photography.'<sup>34</sup> As a way to address this hypothesis, I have examined photograms developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by artists such as Lazlo Moholy-Nagy and Man Ray. The resulting project, *Shadow Box* (Fig. 34), exploits the light sensitivity of photographic paper to record the momentary exposure of the gallery walls to light. The piece is made by passing light through a perspex display cube onto a sheet of photographic paper placed on the gallery wall. The resulting photograms, displayed alongside the actual cubes and light sources, emphasized the shared capacity of the cubes and the gallery walls, as display mechanisms, to transform objects into art. My aim is for the work to reflect upon how the gallery space guides the responses of audience members.

This aim corresponds with how I have redeveloped *Day Room* for the same Manchester exhibition. BLANKSPACE features a large first floor gallery, and for the

---

<sup>34</sup> *Concrete Photography*, ed. by Gottfried Jager, Rolf H. Krauss, and Beate Reese (Bielefeld: Kerber Verlag, 2005), p. 15.



exhibition displaced grids of photographs taken of the front wall onto the rear wall (Fig. 35). The audience were thus confronted with a 24-hour recording front wall of the gallery displaced onto the rear wall. In its previous manifestation, the work transposed the space of my own artistic production onto the gallery. My aim was to produce a hybrid space in which acts of contemplation might be conceived of as mental production – critical evaluations of the function of the gallery and the visitor's own role within it. Upon reflection and through further engagement with installations studied in my dissertation, such as Dan Graham's *Public Space Two Audiences* (1976) (Fig. 36). I decided that effecting such a conjunction of spaces was unnecessary, and that questions about the function of the gallery could be more effectively posed by placing the gallery itself on display, as Graham had done.

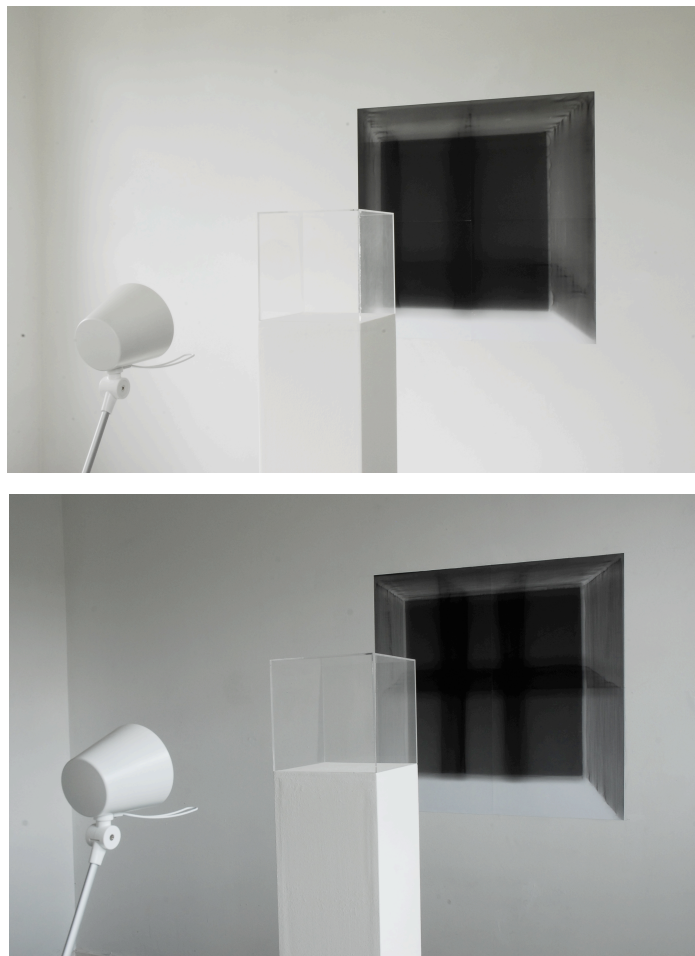


Fig. 34, Andy Broadey, *Shadow Box*, (installation view), BLANKSPACE, Manchester, UK, 2011.



Fig. 35, Andy Broadey, *Day Room*, installation view, BLANKSPACE, Manchester, UK, 2011.



Fig. 36, Dan Graham, *Public Space / Two Audiences*, installation, installed in 'Ambiente Arte', 37<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, 1976.

Whilst *Day Room* and *Shadow Box* focus upon the basic constituents of the gallery space so as to confront the viewer with their own presence within the gallery, *Re-model*

(Figs. 37.1, 37.2), the installation that I contributed towards the 2011 Water Tower Art Fest, considers the re-appropriation of urban spaces for the purpose of artistic display. In this sense *Re-Model* extended from the work I had undertaken in the third year of my project on *The Museum of Windows*. The utilisation of Sofia's Central Mineral Baths followed a trend first initiated by Alanna Heiss, who, in 1976, under the rubric of the Institute of Urban Resources, re-developed a derelict public school building in Queens, New York, as an 'alternative' exhibition space known as P.S.1.<sup>35</sup> The appropriation of the Mineral Baths follows this model, except for the fact that the Mineral Baths are currently being renovated and converted into the Museum of Sofia and offer both completed gallery spaces and undeveloped spaces, all of which the festival committee had decided to use for displays.



Fig. 37.1, Andy Broadey, *Re-Model*, (detail view), building materials and fresnel light, installation presented within The Central Mineral Baths, Sofia, Bulgaria, as part of WaterTower Art Fest, 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Bois, et al., *art since 1900* (2004), pp. 576-577





Fig. 37.2, Andy Broadey, *Re-Model*, (installation view), building materials and fresnel light, installation presented within the Central Mineral Baths, in Sofia, Bulgaria, as part of WaterTower Art Fest, 2011.

The piece developed out of an interest in why this particular building was chosen by the festival committee as a temporary exhibition space during the process of its long-term redevelopment by the city authorities as a museum. The Central Mineral Baths (Fig. 38) comprises a series of large rectilinear halls extending from a tall central dome, flanked by two wider domes. The halls are largely cuboid but are made to appear curvilinear by a series of arched windows and a central arched doorway that feature prominent architraves (Fig. 39). The Baths were designed in the style of the Vienna Secession by Petko Momchilov and Friedrich Grünanger in 1904/5. The prominence of the curvilinear forms, which also feature in the extensive interior vaulting, derive from curving forms in nature that were a common feature of works in this style. The building also features extensive ornamentation with a series of maiolica inserts typical of the ornamental designs of the Art Nouveau movement, produced by the attempts of artists and designers to integrate the fields of fine and applied arts. The domes that form the building's impressive façade also rise up from columns inside the space to create airy interiors (Fig. 40). The Mineral Baths then combines opulence and grandeur, whilst providing expansive rectilinear spaces suited to conventional forms of artistic or museum display – thus appealing to both the Festival committee and the city authorities.



Fig. 38, Sofia, Central Mineral Baths (exterior detail), designed by Petko Momchilov and Friedrich Grünanger, built 1904/5.



Fig. 39, Sofia, Central Mineral Baths (exterior view), designed by Petko Momchilov and Grünanger, built 1904/5.

I was particularly interested in how the tiled halls within the building were being transformed into galleries (Fig. 41). All contents had been emptied from the space and the original marble features were surrounded with clean white plaster-work, producing spaces reminiscent of traditional white cube galleries. In its present state, the building is no longer a bathhouse, but neither is it yet a museum, and it is in this condition that for six days it served as an exhibition space during the WaterTower Festival. *Re-model* reflected upon this conversion process and sought to offer a critique of the conditions that gave rise to the institutional status of the site during the festival.



Fig. 40, Sofia, Central Mineral Baths (interior detail), designed by Petko Momchilov and Friedrich Grünanger, built 1904/5.



Fig. 41, Sofia, Central Mineral Baths (interior detail), designed by Petko Momchilov and Friedrich Grünanger built 1904/5.

The work brought emphasis to the importance of the building's façade and newly re-plastered exhibition halls in the designation of the space as an art gallery. My aim was to use the exhibition hall to place the building's façade on display, whilst also drawing attention to the building's current process of redevelopment. From around the building I collected materials that were discarded during this process, and used these to produce a model of the building. This approximation representing the actual space was positioned before a spotlight so that a silhouette of the building's façade was cast onto the white wall behind. Audience members, perhaps already lulled into a contemplative mood by the traditional gallery surroundings, and now looking at the model and images of that same gallery, may have found themselves turning that contemplation onto the

gallery itself and its design; looking at the models, they might have begun to examine how their own responses to the exhibition were conditioned by the physical environment – a physical environment approximated, replicated and emphasised in the *Re-Model* exhibit. The combination of the models, the static shadow-pictures of the Central Mineral Baths, the gallery itself as an architectural space and the audience's reactions to these, together complete the installation. The result is a site-specific artwork that offers a critique of the conditions that give rise to the site's status as an exhibition venue within this year's festival and its proposed re-development as a city museum.

The realisation of these projects was informed by the extension of my developmental thinking from Owens' notion of site-specific practice as an allegorical construct, and Burgin's contentions that architectural interventions examined situational cues, towards Krauss's notion of critical post modern art practice as structured through the production of differential media – a flexible set of conventions constructed by artists manipulating and recombining structural elements of particular scenarios and cultural practices. Krauss emphasised that such works possessed a 'recursive structure'<sup>36</sup> by which she meant that they generate recurrence or repetition of the constitutive elements of a given context, serving to draw these elements forth to the attention of a viewer. In each of the projects created in the fourth year of my project I have sought to create such a recurrence within a range of architectural sites in order to create opportunities for people within these spaces to consider how a site's architectural structure conditions their responses, and to re-negotiate their own patterns of behaviour within these spaces.

In a context in which art appears to be continually expanding and diversifying, I have chosen to focus my practice upon the conventions of exhibition making that underpin and structure this process. The continued capacity of modes of gallery display to attribute the status of 'art' to objects that would otherwise escape our attention signals the enduring importance of practices such as Graham's and Buren's. As part of an emerging field of practice that uses conventions of exhibition-making to create installations, I have sought to use the gallery site as a frame in which to exhibit the mundane and the everyday. I have also photographically intervened within gallery architecture in order to reflect upon the function of particular gallery spaces, and to

---

<sup>36</sup> Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage Upon the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), p. 7.



draw audience members to question their own roles within these spaces. Now, with *Re-Model*, I have confronted viewers with approximations of the buildings they occupy, inviting them to consider the influence of the building's exterior architecture upon their responses to and within the space. My ultimate aim in each of these projects is to provide opportunities for members of my audience to become active interpreters of the situational cues that structure their engagements with art.

## Conclusion

My research project, *Building Sites in the Expanding Field*, has sought to examine how conventions of exhibition making continue to condition public presentations of art, at a time when this field appears to be at a stage of unbridled diversification and expansion. This has resulted in a series of installations within a range of contemporary exhibition spaces that have sought to examine how those spaces function and shape viewer responses. I have developed the installations by considering critical commentaries upon exhibition sites historically developed by practitioners of architectural intervention and by drawing upon these case studies to manipulate the architectural structure of the spaces. Rosalind Krauss's seminal text 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' has provided a point of departure that has allowed me to grasp how the relationship between artworks and sites of artistic presentation have been structured in the post-modern era. This text, alongside Owens' 'Allegorical Impulse', Burgin's 'Situational Aesthetics', and Krauss's later book, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, have provided a framework of theoretical notions that have allowed me to structure critical interventions within white cube spaces, vacant industrial buildings and empty municipal buildings, each time considering the conventions of display that structure these spaces as sites of artistic display.

With each project I have focused upon how conventions of display are deployed within these exhibition spaces, and how they structure the reception of works presented within them because they reciprocally confirm the expectations that people bring to the spaces. These conventions and expectations are generated through historical processes, and I have sought to create projects that foreground the social construction of the situations in which my audience finds itself involved. To this end I have integrated leaflet holders and the drama of the family slide show into gallery spaces, transforming them into objects of contemplation. With the *Museum of Windows* I have focused on how the historical development of the white cube format informs the current re-development of industrial spaces in Digbeth, Birmingham, into exhibition spaces. These projects have the advantage of placing the site within a wider socio-historical context, yet have the disadvantage of leading the viewer's attention away from the situation with which they are immediately engaged in order to make the process of its construction

comprehensible. For these reasons I chose to make *Day Room* and *Shadow Box*, which focus more directly upon the context of presentation itself, the basis of my final exhibition in BLANKSPACE.

### **Postscript – Years Five and Six (2011-13)**

Responding to discussions with my examiners in my 2011 viva voce, I decided that it was important to my artistic development that I respond to points raised during this meeting through my practice. I have therefore presented here three new projects that I produced in 2012/13, in support of my resubmission. I will outline the issues to which they responded in the development of my re-drafted thesis before considering each project in turn. I have also included images documenting a further project, *Lapidarium* (2012); these begin each volume of this study. They document an exhibition I made that consisted of research and promotional materials, sketches, notes, and art historical references, all of which have been relevant to the development of my practice over the six-year period of my PhD study. Similar to a real lapidarium's function of presenting fragments and artefacts from archaeological digs in informal displays, these pictures place my PhD submission in the total context of a developing art practice in which is included all of the ideas and proposals that, whilst they were not developed into finished works, are nevertheless integral to the research process.

During this period, I have sought to develop working processes that capture a sense of the unending nature of critique; an on-going interrogation of ideological constructs that is without conclusion because one can never lift oneself out of ideology, and only turn a critical focus upon the contradictions it exhibits. Engaging with Michael Asher's 1974 Claire Copley Gallery installation within the context of this study's theoretical component, for instance, helped me to understand that critique works not only on an external object, but also on the internal processes of interpretation through which such objects are regarded. The diversity of responses to that installation (see Volume Two, Chapter Two) attest to the multiple contrasting interpretations that appear viable, but which yet expose contradictions in the mode of comprehension itself. Throughout the social body interpretation is an ongoing process that leads to action and informs communication. Thus one critical reflection can soon be lost within a network of ongoing social production. Thus in order to maintain a critical impact, gestures such as Asher's must be disseminated. Furthermore, the material contexts appropriated as sites of critique must be turned back onto the construction of these same sites as objects of ideology. Thus critical interventions are manoeuvres performed in an ongoing chain

interpretation, action and material production. I have already linked the development of my practice to Rosalind Krauss's notion of recursivity, and I believe that such a conception of art practice fits with the example of the Russian literary theorist Viktor Shklovsky's notion of the 'Knight's Move' through which Krauss herself develops her own analysis.<sup>37</sup> Shklovsky argued that the L-shaped movements of the knight around the chessboard highlight the conventions through which it moves. So as well as producing a movement in an ongoing game of chess it also invites reflection upon how this one piece operates within the game.<sup>38</sup> I have sought in my recent projects to interrogate how material contexts and forms of representation are mobilised in the ongoing production of ideology, rather than treating them as static contexts. To that end, I have produced works that deal with the ideological function of forms of representation, and which exist as documentation of architectural interventions. I have sought to use museum spaces and co-operative institutions as a stage for the re-evaluation of political histories. I have also made the way in which previous projects (such as *Day Room*) realised the practice of critique as a physical labour undertaken over the course of a day into a theme within these recent works. Engagement with the writings of David Beech has also led me to consider how the ideological separation of modes of reception within white cube galleries from forms of wage labour and capitalist exchange might be re-appropriated by artists and art audiences in ways that promote the autonomy of social interaction outside of these frameworks.

*Sight Seeing* (2012), a piece that maintained my engagement with Bulgaria's WaterTower Art Fest (22-24<sup>th</sup> June 2012), undertook such an examination of the relationship between museum display and the tourist industry. In it, I considered how an archive of images appropriated from Bulgarian travel-guides produced in the UK over the course of a fifty-year period (1961–2011) might frame the perspective from which museum display is conceived of from the perspective of the tourist industry. Recent debates have identified a slippage of priorities between these two sectors, whereby accessibility can dissolve into entertainment, and art can be pressed into the service of what Enzensberger claimed were the tourist's key motivations: escapism and nostalgia.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Rosalind Krauss *Under Blue Cup* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 2011), p. 101.

<sup>38</sup> Viktor Shklovsky, *Knight's Move*, trans. by Richard Sheldon (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005). p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Gemunden Gerd, 'Introduction to Enzensberger's "A Theory of Tourism"', *New German Critique*, 68

The result would be the type of exhibition that Declan McGonagle has termed as 'wide and shallow [engagement] rather than narrow and deep – sightseeing rather than insight.'<sup>40</sup> These considerations correlate with debates Tony Bennett identifies as mediating the museum profession. He cites two dominant viewpoints, populist and statist, and states that:

the former, envisioning the museum's future as part of the leisure industry, [argues] that people should be given what they want, while the latter, retaining the view of museums as instruments of instruction, argues that they should remain [a] means for lifting the cultural and intellectual level of the population.<sup>41</sup>

The travel-guides I worked with were designed to provide information about destinations, offering advice on places to visit, places to avoid, local customs, the language, food, accommodation, etc.. The information that they include reveals assumptions made by the editors about the likely interests of the books' readership – from the pursuit of leisure or adventure, to potential anxieties about travelling within an alien culture – and about how that readership is intended to, or supposed to, interact with its host culture. By re-photographing and enlarging images drawn from British-made Bulgarian travel-guides, I aimed to show how these books have ideologically framed Bulgarian culture through attitudes that are specific to the time and place of their original publication, offering a particular reading of the culture and its museum infrastructure.

The work was exhibited in the former headquarters of the Bulgarian Telecommunications company, now re-branded as VIVACOM. The work was situated on the ground floor of the building, which was split into two exhibition halls, one which was used as a show room for mobile phones and one which housed temporary art exhibitions, such as WaterTower Art Fest (Fig. 42). Exhibited against a large marble wall adjacent to the entrance and framed, though informally arranged on the floor, the pictures appeared as a collection of generic images awaiting exhibition and clichéd attitudes awaiting re-appropriation. Images of museums and galleries that featured in

---

(Spring-Summer 1996), 113-115.

<sup>40</sup> McGonagle, Declan, 'Terrible Beauty', *International 04*, ed. by Paul Domela (Liverpool: Liverpool Biennial, 2004).

<sup>41</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 105.



the travel-guides played a prominent role in the installation (Figs. 43, 44 and 45). My aim here was to show how the co-existence of museums and art galleries with other attractions on the tourist's itinerary can inform curatorial practices. The installation also demonstrates how art museums co-exist with other attractions on the tourist's itinerary, and how this contextualisation means that exhibitions can become reduced to nothing more than yet another scheduled stop on a sightseer's agenda.



Fig. 42, Andy Broadey, *Sight Seeing* (installation view), framed laser-jet prints on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Deep Matte paper, part of the WaterTower Art Fest, 2012





Fig. 43, *The National Palace of Culture in Sofia*, re-photographed from Philip Ward, *Bulgaria: A Travel Guide*, (Cambridge: Oleander Press, 1989), p. 100, laser-jet print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Deep Matte paper, from scanned from Kodak Colour Plus film negative. Part of the installation *Sight Seeing*, presented at the WaterTower Art Fest, 2012.



Fig. 44, *Ruse Opera House*, re-photographed from Philip Ward, *Bulgaria: A Travel Guide*, (Cambridge: Oleander Press, 1989), p. 138, laser-jet print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Deep Matte paper, from scanned from Kodak Colour Plus film negative. Part of the installation *Sight Seeing*, presented at WaterTower Art Fest 2012.





Fig. 45. *Wooden Dolls for Sale in a Museum Shop*, re-photographed from Julien Popescu, *Bulgaria*, (Hong Kong: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 46, laser-jet print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Deep Matte paper, from scanned from Kodak Colour Plus film negative. Part of *Sight Seeing* presented at the WaterTower Art Fest 2012.

Later that year, I was commissioned by the Co-operative Group to contribute towards a series of postcards named *AGE OF COOPERATIVES* (Fig. 46). In response to considerations of the relation between site-specific installation and the documentary image, I used the commission as an opportunity to produce a physical installation that was presented in the form of photo-documentation. I wanted to make a one-off work that was re-producible and transportable so that the proposals it made about appropriations of architectural space could be disseminated on an ongoing basis. The work was presented at ‘Co-operatives United’ (29<sup>th</sup> Oct – 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2012) at the Gmex/Manchester Central in Manchester. Responding to the materials from the National Co-operative Archive held at the National Pioneers Museum in Rochdale, I worked with a wheatsheaf logo that featured on many different Co-operative Wholesale Society products.

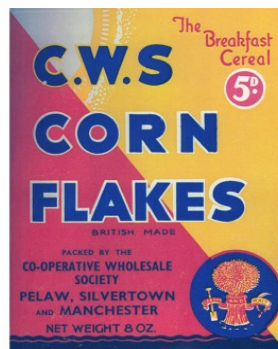


Fig. 47, C.W.S Cornflakes packet, circa 1930s



Fig. 46, *AGE OF COOPERATIVES* Postcard Collection on sale at *Co-operatives United* (29<sup>th</sup> Oct - 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2012), Gmex/Manchester Central.

I worked with a 1930s cornflakes packet (Fig. 47) and also drew upon the current development of the new Co-operative headquarters in Manchester: both symbolise cooperation, but also self-promotion. I sought to foreground this mythologising of the ethics of co-operation as a form of brand promotion within my work, whilst also drawing attention to architectural structure as the inevitable support of co-operative institutions. I created a wall drawing using building cement to represent the physical space of cooperation – referring both to the Co-operative headquarters and to my workspace in the artist's co-operative, Bankley Studios. The work displays the wheatsheaf logo realised as a constellation of stars superimposed on a star map, referring the viewer back to the Greek myths from which the constellations derive their names (Fig. 48).





A 'wheatseaf logo on a 1930s' cornflakes packet, and the new Co-operative headquarters in Manchester: both symbolise cooperation, but also self-promotion. To explore this mythologising function, I have created a wall drawing using building materials that represent the physical space of cooperation – referring both to the Cooperative headquarters and to my workspace in the artist's co-operative Bankley Studios – and that displays the wheatseaf logo superimposed on a constellation map that refers the viewer back to ancient myths.”

- Andy Broadey,  
*Labor and Wait*, cement wall drawing, 2012

[www.bankley.org.uk](http://www.bankley.org.uk)

## ARTICULATE

The "AGE OF COOPERATIVES" postcard set has been commissioned by the Manchester Area Committee of The Co-operative Group. The artists involved in this project are all based at Bankley Studios & Gallery, which is an artist's co-operative based in Levenshulme, South Manchester. Founded as a co-operative in 1998, Bankley Studios provide studios for practicing artists in the North West region, to develop a sense of creative community among their members and within the local area.  
Printed by calverts.coop

The **co-operative**  
membership

**BANKLEY  
STUDIOS &  
GALLERY**

Fig. 48, Andy Broadey *Labour and Wait*, cement wall drawing, presented as a postcard as part of the collection *AGE OF COOPERATIVES*, at 'Co-operatives United' (29<sup>th</sup> Oct - 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2012) at the Gmex/Manchester Central in Manchester.



Finally, in the summer of 2013, I brought my engagement with Bulgarian social history to a conclusion. Making a third installation within WaterTower Art Fest (19<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2013), I was able to realise an installation using 35mm slide projection, based on a photo shoot conducted over the period of one day within the now derelict Memorial House for the Bulgarian Communist Party, situated on top of Mount Buzludja, near Shipka. The work was presented in the Sofia Arsenal Museum for Contemporary Art (Fig. 49), and then presented alongside a talk given at the Museum of Socialist Art on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2013. The following text is an edited transcript of the talk I gave.



Fig. 49, Andy Broadey, *Still*, 35mm slide projection from Agfa Photo Precisa 100 film, installed at Sofia Arsenal Museum for Contemporary Art, as part of WaterTower Art Fest (19<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2013).

**Still (2013) Presentation at the Museum of Socialist Art, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2013**

I'm going to talk today in relation to my project *Still*, which has been presented at the SAMCA, since Thursday and here today at the Museum of Socialist art. [...] I want to talk to you about the work both in relation to the thinking that informs my practice, the architectural structure of Buzludja and socio-historical context to which this building belongs, and of which I feel it is emblematic.

[...]

The work's title, *Still*, conveys several different meanings that together communicate the sense of time past, passing and to come that I have tried to capture in the work. Stillness describes the condition of the photograph; an image that mechanically captures the dynamic flux of events, rendering periods of duration as stills. Similarly, still life painting uses inanimate objects to depict of everyday events. Furthermore, political ideologies claim to offer stable principles within dynamically changing circumstances, and monumental architecture such as Buzludja works to support this candidacy for permanence. But change is constant, and the word *still* also conveys another meaning which is useful to my work – a sense of the belatedness, the yet to come. Each of these meanings reflects my thinking about the Memorial House for the Bulgarian Communist Party, which is slowly disintegrating into the earth on top of Mount Buzludja.

The Buzludja monument shares its current condition with much communist-era East European architecture and socialist realist monuments that are now surrounded by the bustle of commercial activity and the universally recognisable signage of globalised capitalism. Nearly twenty-five years after the collapse of communism, the projected future symbolised by these statues of political leaders, martyrs and heroic workers seems oddly disjointed from the social reality that has emerged around them.<sup>42</sup> Such sites have recently become the object of several documentary projects exploring the legacy of communist ideology within Eastern Europe and beyond. Carey Young, whose recent video installation, *Memento Park* (2010) features shots of communist-era statues

---

<sup>42</sup> See David Harvey: 'Neoliberalization has in effect swept across the world like a vast tidal wave of institutional reform and discursive adjustment, and while there is plenty of evidence of its uneven geographical development, no place can claim total immunity.' 'Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction', *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 88:2 (June 2006), 145-158.

in Budapest, states that the statues she filmed now exist in a state of 'suspended animation'.<sup>43</sup> A similar fate has befallen late communist-era architecture, and while Frédéric Chaubin's *Cosmic Communist Constructions Photographed* (2011) celebrates the buildings, Armin Linke & Srdjan Jovanovic Weiss's *Socialist Architecture: The Vanishing Act* (2012) examines their status in relation to the contemporary architectural landscape.<sup>44</sup> Other projects, such as *Unfinished Modernisations – Between Utopia and Pragmatism* at Belgrade's Museum of Yugoslav History, have looked to the lessons and unrealised possibilities that such structures still hold for contemporary urban planning.<sup>45</sup> I, too, as part of an ongoing engagement with Bulgarian culture facilitated by my three-year involvement with WaterTower Art Fest, have been drawn to a disintegrating late communist-era structure, Guéorguy Stoilov's Buzludzha Monument, located in the Buzludzha National Park in Central Bulgaria.

Designed in 1981, this building commemorates both a battle with Turkish armies in 1868 and the Buzludzha Congress in 1891, a meeting that led to the formation of the Bulgarian Socialist Party. My interest lies in how this building, in its current state of entropy, testifies to a shift in Bulgaria's political compass: how the country's 1989 rejection of communism can be seen to correlate with the abandonment and deterioration of this building. Documentary photos of its 1981 opening seem to capture not only a monument to Bulgaria's socialist past, but, with the flag-waving crowds, the apparent potential of the country's communist future; yet the building now sits atop its mountain as a relic, the left-over ideological construct of an unrealised – or unrealisable – political vision that nevertheless remains as the primary historical precedent for Bulgaria's current cultural and political make-up. The building is a circular structure. One enters through a spacious ground floor foyer flanked by stairwells on its left and right hands sides that lead up towards a spectacular inner conference room. Four further stairwells then lead up towards a perimeter corridor enabling visitors to circumnavigate

---

<sup>43</sup> Carey Young, 'Statement concerning the work *Memento Park* (2010)', <<http://www.careyyoung.com/past/mementopark.html>> [accessed 18 January 2013].

<sup>44</sup> Chaubin considers that his project 'reveal[s] an unexpected rebirth of imagination, an unknown burgeoning that took place from 1970 until 1990.' Frédéric Chaubin, *CCCP: Cosmic Communist Constructions Photographed*, (Cologne: Taschen, 2011), book information on rear cover.

<sup>45</sup> This project aimed to 'analyse and compare the production of built environment in two opposed economic and political systems: those of socialist Yugoslavia and the market-based democracies that emerged out of its collapse.' *Unfinished Modernisations, About Project*. <<http://www.unfinishedmodernisations.net/pages/about-project-2/>> [accessed 18 January 2013].

the site.

I chose to work with the perimeter corridor, because I wanted to deal with movement and explore the multiple functions performed by this transitory space. Aside from facilitating movement around the site the corridor performs two further functions. It facilitates views of the surrounding landscape through a series of large curved windows set in the outer wall, and supports the depiction of Bulgarian history, rendered in mosaic tiles on the internal wall. I have made a photographic installation designed to contextualize Buzludzha Monument as a part of the contemporary cultural landscape of Bulgaria. The shoot was made on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of June 2013, a time of year that twenty-three years previously the Bulgarian electorate was contemplating its future after the collapse of communism. I positioned two Russian rangefinder cameras on tripods inside this corridor – a Zorki 4 and a FED 4, also dating from the 1980s – at the furthest point before the curvature of the corridor took the Zorki camera out of the FED's field of view. Facing in a clockwise direction the Fed camera took a photograph looking back into the space occupied by the Zorki camera. Then, the Zorki camera looped around the Fed camera, which also turned 180 degrees. In its new position the Zorki camera then looked back on the FED camera, in the position from which the previous shot was taken, from the furthest point before which it disappears out of range. I repeated the process moving cameras and taking photographs every eighteen minutes until after twenty four hours, having circumnavigated the site several times, I had produced eighty exposures; enough to make one full rotation of a slide carousel.

The resulting photographs are projected onto a gallery wall using a 35mm slide projector. Each photograph shows a section of the surrounding landscape of the Stara-Planina, and the camera that took the previous photograph in situ within a particular section of the corridor, which itself shows the murals of Bulgarian history. Each click of the carousel's rotation continues the movement around the building, with the cameras perpetually moving counter-clockwise in the direction to which their back is turned. The carousel also continually repeats this day in the gallery space, during which the cameras documented this corridor space on multiple occasions, repeatedly re-contextualising these same features and vistas in changing conditions. During the carousel's rotation the sun sinks to the horizon spraying shards of light throughout the corridor, and throwing complex shadows made by the wreckage of the building's roof throughout the space.

We then see the sun set before the building is suddenly thrown into darkness, a period during which we see nothing inside the building, and only the muted night sky through the congress house's windows. Next the sun rises again, before we are finally brought back to the midday penetration of overhead sunlight casting the space in deep chiaroscuro (Fig. 50).

My aim with the work is to invite prolonged engagement with these continually varying representations of the same building. For the entire period of the exhibition the projector continues to rotate allowing visitors to continually view the work, and return to it on multiple occasions. Repetition and variation become key thematics of this serialised representation of Buzludja. The building also becomes the technical support for the work, as the building's own circumference defines the cameras' locations and the distance through which the cameras finally travel. Together the exposures offer multiple images of Stoilov's building, featuring the mosaics produced by a team of Bulgarian artists, the refuse that tourists have left after their forced entry to the site and the wreckage now left by acts of theft, vandalism, and the forces of nature. The building now simultaneously embodies the multiple acts of production and its significance for a contemporary audience lies in the layering of their historical accumulation. In this way, I have invited people before my work to engage in a critical reading of the Buzludja site in its current state.

I intended for the work to take on an allegorical structure in the manner articulated by Craig Owens in his 1983 essay 'The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism'. My photographic intervention within the site becomes a vehicle for traversing through and reading the Buzludja site, as well as, through the carousel's perpetual rotations, suggesting the accumulation of time within the site. In this way I understand the work to be a palimpsest in the manner described by Owens, as 'one text is read through another, however fragmentary, intermittent, or chaotic their relationship may be'.<sup>46</sup> Palimpsests are re-usable writing media from which text can be scraped off allowing new writing, yet with each new inscription traces of former texts remain. Thus, whilst one reads the most recent writing, one is also made aware of the previous writings with which it mingles. At Buzludja the production and gradual dismantling of

---

<sup>46</sup> Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism,' *October*, 12 (Spring 1980), 67-86, p. 69.

the site makes the layering of these multiple writings especially apparent, and in this way perhaps my own intention originates in the impulse towards allegory that Owens identified with critical postmodernism. Owens describes this through Robert Smithson's comment that 'in the illusory babels of language, an artist might advance in order to get lost'.<sup>47</sup> By traversing the multiple layers of cultural meaning embedded in the ruined structure of Buzludja, I believe that such an activity could yield productive reconsiderations of not only Bulgaria's cultural history, but also of what socialism might mean in a twenty-first century context, here and beyond. Indeed, this was my intention in the day's work I undertook as a cameraman within this space.

The work then brings together the sequence of the day, as mechanistically ordered by the slide carousels, with the historical sequence of time, as captured by the memorialising function of the monument itself and the murals' depiction of Bulgarian history. The conjunction of past, present and future that I wanted to generate is indebted to Walter Benjamin's notion of *Jetztzeit*, or 'the time of now'.<sup>48</sup> In this formulation, each passing moment contains the possibility of redeeming the past in a way that might transform future circumstances. Benjamin says,

For the revolutionary thinker, the peculiar revolutionary chance offered by every historical moment gets its warrant from the political situation. But it is equally grounded, for this thinker, in the right of entry which the historical moment enjoys vis-à-vis a quite distinct chamber of the past, one which up to that point has been closed and locked.<sup>49</sup>

Through this work, then, I want to invite both remembrance and re-evaluation of the problems and opportunities of Bulgaria's past, a history that I believe at this moment of rapid political change across the globe might also carry broader international significance.

---

<sup>47</sup> Robert Smithson, 'A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art', in *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), p 78. Quoted in Owens, 1980, p. 60.

<sup>48</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'Thesis on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), p 255.

<sup>49</sup> Benjamin, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Vol 4*, ed. by Marcus Bollock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 401-402.









Fig. 50, Andy Broadey, *Still*, a selection (Numbers 52-67 presented here in sequence) from the eighty slides that comprise the work, from Agfa Photo Precisa 100 film, 2013.

### Volume One Bibliography

- Althusser, Louis, 'On the Materialist Dialectic', in *For Marx* (London: Verso, 2005)
- Benjamin, Walter, 'Thesis on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999)
- Beech, Dave, Andy Hewitt, and Mel Jordan, *Freee Art Collective Manifesto for a Counter-Hegemonic Art*, (Loughborough: Freee Publishing, 2007)
- Beech, David, 'Include me out!', *Art Monthly*, 315 (April 2008), 1-3
- Bennett, Tony, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995)
- Berg, Stephan, *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, etc* (Hannover: Kunstverein, 2006)
- Bois, Yve-Alain, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, eds., *art since 1900: modernism, antimodernism, postmodernism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004)
- Bois, Yve-Alain, *Painting as Model* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993)
- Bollock, Marcus and Michael W. Jennings, eds., *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 4* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996)
- Buchloh, Benjamin, ed., *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992)
- Buren, Daniel, 'The Function of Architecture: Notes on work in connection with the places where it is installed taken between 1967 and 1975, some of which are specially summarised here', in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, ed. by Bruce W. Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996)
- Bürger, Peter, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984)
- Chaubin, Frédéric, *CCCP: Cosmic Communist Constructions Photographed* (Cologne: Taschen, 2011)
- Fraser, Andrea, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique', *Artforum*. 44:1 (September 2005), 278-286
- Gemunden Gerd, 'Introduction to Enzensberger's "A Theory of Tourism"', *New German Critique*, 68 (Spring-Summer 1996) 113-15
- Harrison, Charles and Paul Wood, eds., *Art in Theory 1900-2000* (London: Blackwell, 2003)

- Harvey, David, 'Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction', *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 88:2 (June 2006), 145-158.
- Jager, Gottfried, Rolf H. Krauss, and Beate Reese, eds, *Concrete Photography* (Bielfeld: Kerber Verlag, 2005)
- Judd, Donald, 'Barnett Newman', *Studio International*, 179:919 (1970), 67-69
- Krauss, Rosalind, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', in *Modern Sculpture Reader*, ed. by David Hulks, Alex Potts, and Jon Wood (Leeds: The Henry Moore Institute, 2007)
- *A Voyage Upon the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000)
- *Under Blue Cup* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 2011)
- Malraux, Andre, *The Voices of Silence* (London: Paladin, 1974)
- McGonagle, Declan, 'Terrible Beauty', *International 04*, ed. by Paul Domela (Liverpool: Liverpool Biennial, 2004)
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2002)
- *The Visible and Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968)
- Nixon, Mignon, Alex Potts, Briony Fer, Antony Hudek and Julian Stallabrass, 'Round Table: Tate Modern', *October*, 98 (Autumn, 2001), 3-25
- Newman, Barnett, *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1992)
- Owens, Craig, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism', *October*, 12 (Spring 1980), 67-86
- Raunig, Gerald and Gene Ray, *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique* (London: Mayfly Books, 2009)
- Roberts, John, 'Art, 'Enclave Theory' and the Communist Imaginary', *Third Text*, 21: 4 (July 2007), 369-386
- Shklovsky, Viktor, *Knight's Move*, trans. by Richard Sheldon (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005)
- Smithson, Robert, 'A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art', in *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996).
- Texte Zur Kunst*, 'Institutionskritik', 59 (September 2005)
- Welchman, John C., ed., *Institutional Critique and After* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2005)

Visitor Figures 2012: Exhibition and Museum Survey', *The Art Newspaper*, Section 2, 245 (April 2013)

Young, Carey, 'Statement concerning the work *Memento Park* (2010)',

<<http://www.careyyoung.com/past/mementopark.html>> [accessed 18 January 2013]

*Transforming Tate Modern Environmental Statement: Non Technical Summary*,

<<http://www.tate.org.uk/about/projects/tate-modern-project/design/>>

[accessed 11 September 2013]

Unfinished Modernisations, *About Project*,

<<http://www.unfinishedmodernisations.net/pages/about-project-2/>>

[accessed 18 January 2013]

**Building Sites In The Expanding Field**

**Volume Two**

**Andrew Jonathan Broadey**

**Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**The University of Leeds  
School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies**

**September 2013**

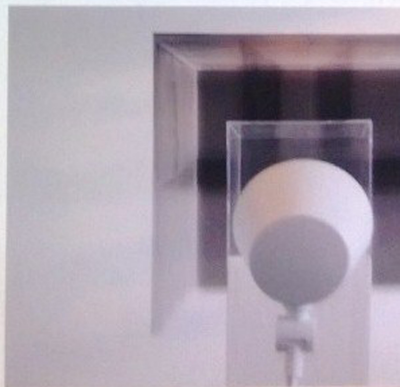
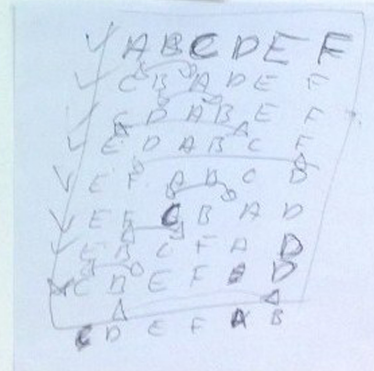
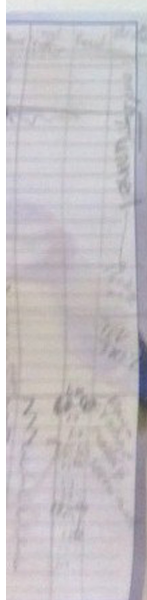
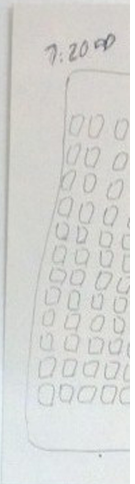
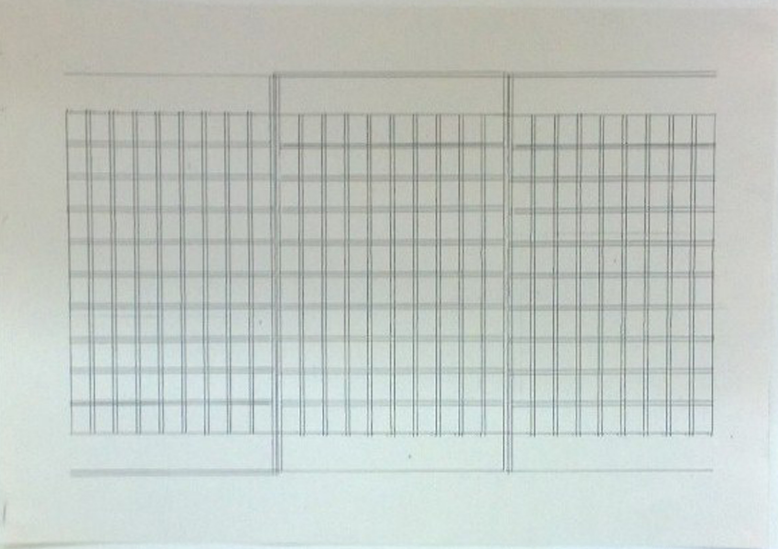
The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement

© 2013 The University of Leeds and Andrew Jonathan Broadey

The right of Andrew Jonathan Broadey to be identified as Author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.





### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisors, Roger Palmer and Joanne Crawford, for their dedicated assistance in the development of this project. I would especially like to thank Roger for his commitment towards the development of my art practice over the last nine years. I would also like to thank my partner, Valerie O'Riordan, for her generous assistance in the realisation of this project and for being a constant source of support throughout it, as well as my daughter Seren for being the most wonderful addition to my life.

**Abstract**

*Building Sites In The Expanding Field* is a two-part research project that examines, through art practice and theory components, relations between institutional critique and white cube gallery conventions at the start of the twenty-first century. The project responds to commentaries by critics such as John Roberts, David Beech and Stewart Martin, in which notions of participation, sociability and conviviality – modes of interaction identified by the curator Nicolas Bourriaud with relational installation – are framed as the institutional framework of the work's articulation. My project, in contrast, examines the relevance of earlier modes of institutional critique to this post-relational moment; it is intended also to bring focus to my own practice of architectural intervention. The project's core problematic is the way in which the ubiquitous frame of display known as the white cube gallery continues to inform gallery design and thus shapes the parameters of artistic reception and critical art practice. My thesis is that the architectural frames of gallery spaces continue to support an ideological construction of artistic reception as a mode of encounter indebted to the legacy of minimalist art and set apart from the instrumentality of capitalist production and consumption outside the gallery's walls. I argue that critical intervention within gallery architecture can prompt people to critically question the relation between the roles or identities they adopt in these spaces and the function that the spaces themselves perform. To this end, I examine historical debates that have linked institutional critique and architectural intervention with notions of allegory, focusing particularly upon the contributions of Michael Asher, Brian O'Doherty, Rosalind E. Krauss, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh and Craig Owens, and present recent post-relational debates in relation to the legacy of the white cube gallery. The key contribution of both the practice and theory components of my project is my critical analysis of the legacy of the white cube gallery beyond the moment of relational installation, as a context open to re-appropriation through allegorical readings that draw forth the processes of its socio-historical construction. Whilst legacies of critical postmodernism figure in post-relational debates staged recently in journals and magazines such as *Third Text* and *Art Monthly*, my project draws explicit links between contemporary modes of artistic display and critique, and this moment.

## Table Of Contents

### Volume Two

List of Illustrations	5
Introduction	8
Chapter One: Exhibition As Medium	16
1. Art Versus Life	17
2. The Historical Emergence of the White Cube Gallery	21
3. The Avant-Garde and the Neo-Avant-Garde	23
4. High Modernism and the Challenge of Minimalism	26
5. An Emergent Critique of the Gallery Space	37
6. The Protest Movement and its Impact on Art Practice	40
7. Michael Asher's 'Spaces' and Pomona College Installations	49
8. The Relation Between the Installation and Site	58
9. Inside the White Cube	63
10. The Expanded Field	70
11. Postmodern Allegory	74
Chapter Two: Institution As Medium	79
1. Michael Asher's Claire Copley Gallery Installation	80
2. Language, Reflexivity and the Emergence of Institutional Critique	82
3. Post-Studio Art	91
4. <i>Aspen 5+6</i>	92
5. The Allegorical Structure of Asher's Claire Copley Gallery Installation	98
6. Literal and Figural/Rhetorical Meaning	105
7. Re-addressing the Medium	111
8. Aesthetic Use-Value	112
9. The Institution of the Public Art Museum, University Art Centre and Commercial Art Gallery	115
Chapter Three: Critical Distance as Medium	120

1. Critical Distance	121
2. The Functional Site	129
2a. Asher's 'Agreement Commissioning Works of Art' (1975)	130
2b. <i>Writings 1973-83 on Works 1969-79</i>	132
2c. The Functional Site	135
3. Second Wave Institutional Critique	139
4. Flexible Accumulation and Critical Services	141
5. The Late-Capitalist Art Museum	147
6. Relational Practice	154
7. Recursion and the Return of the Medium	161
8. 'Voids: A Retrospective'	168
9. Michael Asher's Santa Monica Museum of Art Installation	174
Conclusion	180
Volume Two Bibliography	186

### List of Illustrations

- Fig. 1, William Simpson, *Owen Jones' scheme for the decoration of the Great Exhibition building*, pen, ink and watercolour, 1850. 20
- Fig. 2, Mark Rothko exhibition installation at the Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, 1952. 23
- Fig. 3, *The Family of Man*, (installation view), Museum of Modern Art New York, 1955. 27
- Fig. 4, Alfred H. Barr Jr., *Cubism and Abstract Art*, Museum of Modern Art, hardback book, 1936. 28
- Fig. 5, Jules Olitski, *Instant Loveland*, acrylic on canvas, 295 x 646 cm, 1968. 30
- Fig. 6, Donald Judd, *Untitled*, galvanised iron, six units, each unit 102 x 102 x 102 cm, with 25 cm intervals, 1966. 32
- Fig. 7, Robert Morris, installation at Green Gallery, New York, 1964. 34
- Fig. 8, Jules Olitski, *Bunga 45*, aluminium with acrylic paint, 1967. 37
- Fig. 9, Anthony Caro, *Prairie*, painted steel, 1967. 37
- Fig. 10, Robert Smithson, *Museum of the Void*, pencil on paper, 48 x 60cm, 1969. 39
- Fig. 11, Bruno Barbey, Paris, 6th arrondissement, Boulevard Saint Germain, May 6th 1968, *Students hurling projectiles against the police*, photograph, 1968. 43
- Fig. 12, Protest at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, May 2, 1970, by the Guerilla Art Action Group, (GAAG), the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC), the Black & Puerto Rican Emergency Cultural Coalition. 47
- Fig. 13, Hans Haacke, *MoMA Poll*, part of the exhibition 'Information', Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1970. 49
- Fig. 14, *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, May 19–July 6, 1969. 50
- Fig. 15, Dan Flavin, *Untitled Sonja*, within 'Spaces', Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1969. 52
- Fig. 16, Larry Bell's installation in 'Spaces', Museum of Modern Art New York, vacuum-coated glass and light, 1969. 53
- Fig. 17, Michael Asher, installation in 'Spaces', Museum of Modern Art

New York, 1969.	54
Fig. 18, Michael Asher, <i>No Title</i> , installed at Pomona College Art Gallery, USA, 1970.	58
Fig. 19, Michael Asher, <i>No Title</i> , installed at Pomona College, Art Gallery, USA, 1970.	58
Fig. 20, Michael Asher, <i>No Title</i> , installed at Pomona College Art Gallery, USA, 1970.	58
Fig. 21, <i>Artforum</i> , 14:7 (March 1976), front cover.	65
Fig. 22, Diagram from Krauss's essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', <i>October</i> , 8 (Spring, 1979), p 37.	73
Fig. 23, Michael Asher, <i>No Title</i> , installation in Claire Copley Gallery, Los Angeles, USA, 1974.	81
Fig. 24, Donald Judd, <i>Untitled</i> (installed in Leo Castelli Gallery), galvanised iron slabs, 1970.	84
Fig. 25, Sol LeWitt, <i>Red Square, White Letters</i> , oil on canvas, 91.4 x 91.4 cm, 1963.	86
Fig. 26, Daniel Buren, <i>Within and Beyond the Frame</i> , John Weber Gallery New York, USA, 1973.	89
Fig. 27, Hans Haacke, <i>Condensation Cube</i> , plexiglass and water, 1963.	90
Fig. 28, <i>Aspen 5+6</i> , edited by Brian O'Doherty, 1967.	93
Fig. 29, Mel Bochner, <i>Seven Translucent Tiers</i> in <i>Aspen 5+6</i> , edited by Brian O'Doherty, printed paper, 1967.	95
Fig. 30, Frank Stella, installation view, Leo Castelli Gallery, 1964.	109
Fig 31, Michael Asher, <i>No Title</i> , installation in Claire Copley Gallery (detail view), Los Angeles, USA, 1974.	113
Fig 32, Andrea Fraser, <i>Museum Highlights</i> , performed at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1989.	128
Fig. 33, Bob Projansky, and Seth Siegelaub, <i>The Artist's Reserved Rights of Transfer and Sales Agreement</i> , offset-printed black-and-white, 56 x 43.5 cm, 1971.	131
Fig. 34, Richard Serra, <i>Tilted Arc</i> , Cor-Ten Steel, Federal Plaza, New York, USA, 1981-89.	137



Fig. 35, Donald Judd, <i>Untitled</i> , coloured plexiglass and steel, 1965.	138
Fig. 36, <i>Nonsite, Franklin, New Jersey</i> , painted wooden bins, limestone, with work on paper: gelatin-silver prints and typescript on paper, 1968.	139
Fig. 37, Fred Wilson, <i>Mining the Museum</i> , installation view, Maryland Historical Society, 1992.	141
Fig. 38, 112 Greene St, front entrance, circa 1970.	150
Fig. 39, contemporary image of the exhibition spaces within Marion Goodman Gallery. This site, on West 57 <sup>th</sup> Street in New York, opened in 1981.	150
Fig. 40, interior galleries of the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, Building 5 gallery, February 1999.	154
Fig. 41, Rirkrit Tiravanija, <i>Untitled (Free)</i> , at 303 Gallery in New York, 1992.	156
Fig. 42, 'Voids: A Retrospective', installation view, the Pompidou Centre, Paris, 2009.	169
Fig. 43, 'Voids: a Retrospective', installation view showing two of the galleries nominated by the curators in the role of re-staging historical works that exhibited empty gallery spaces.	172
Fig. 44, Michael Asher, <i>No Title</i> , installation at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, USA, 2008.	175
Fig. 45, Michael Asher, <i>No Title</i> , installation at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, USA, 2008.	176

## Introduction

This dissertation, Volume Two, comprises the theoretical component of my PhD research project, *Building Sites in the Expanding Field* – a study which examines how the set of artistic display conventions commonly referred to as the 'white cube' gallery format continues, in the twenty-first century, to shape the presentation and reception of fine art. Whilst my project also incorporates a practice-based element – a set of proposed and realised installations – that draws upon the same critical and art-historical background as this dissertation, that work is dealt with in Volume One. In this volume, instead, I will concentrate on developing my argument that artists working in the areas of institutional critique and architectural intervention have used, and continue to use, the ubiquitous white cube format to expand the field of fine art practice beyond that conventional gallery framework. Nevertheless, the two halves – practical and theoretical – complement one another, and should be considered as a unit, as together they comprise the completed research project.

The written commentary of Brian O'Doherty and the installations of Michael Asher will be the primary focus of this analysis of white cube conventions and practices of institutional critique. O'Doherty and Asher each considered white cube conventions, since their popularisation in 1950s America, as key drivers of the separation of art from life, screening the interior spaces of art galleries from the social dynamics of life beyond their walls, because of the manner in which their material structures were framed by ideology. Thus, white cube conventions separated displays from functionality, inviting visitors to regard them in terms of the medium specificity of high modernist art or the material specificity of minimalist art. White cube convention, then, appeared to code the gallery space as a site set apart from work life and consumer society, as a space where people were afforded the freedom to regard objects outside of ascriptions of determinate identity. O'Doherty considers how this process played out in relation to exhibitions of high modernist and minimalist art, and, by displacing minimalist methodologies into acts of material intervention within the walls of the gallery space itself, Asher analysed the role played by architecture in shaping this process of separation.

I will refer to this sense of separation by introducing the term *autonomy*, which I have drawn from Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974), a text that analyses

the forces that, throughout the twentieth century, have contested the division of art and life. Bürger states that

the *autonomy of art* is a category of bourgeois society. It permits the description of art's detachment from the context of practical life as a historical development – that among the members of those classes which, at least at times, are free from the pressures of the need for survival, a sensuousness could evolve that was not part of any means-ends relationships'.<sup>1</sup>

The argument that I will pursue throughout this second volume is that the gallery space (or indeed any other context nominated as a display apparatus) has historically served as a key factor in the production of art's autonomy status, and continues to function as the conditioning context from within which the status of works of art are determined. Drawing upon Louis Althusser's theorisation of the ideological function of social institutions, I root the genesis of these critiques of artistic production and display in the widespread re-evaluations of models of American liberal democracy undertaken by the protest movement and commentators within the New Left. Linking practices of artistic critique to this broader critique of social institutions, I argue that the artwork of Michael Asher and the writings of Brian O'Doherty offer a set of tools with which to examine the ideological construction of art's autonomy in ways that remain relevant today. Through these engagements with Asher and O'Doherty, I contend that art appears publicly through institutional frames of display, which constitute an inescapable problematic that might be understood to be the first set of issues to which critical art practices respond.

Throughout this study, I seek to link perceptions of the gallery space with the connections that Althusser draws between repeated social practices and the reproduction of ideology. Following O'Doherty, I argue that the redeployment of white cube conventions as the context in which people encountered high modernist and minimalist art throughout the 1960s and 1970s brought particular ideologies of the gallery space into existence that then came to shape the manner in which people encountered the gallery space itself. Once stabilised, these conceptions allowed white cube conventions

---

<sup>1</sup> Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1974); trans. by Michael Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 46.

to be reassigned to a range of different architectural contexts, expanding the apparatus of display out into an increasing array of architectural arenas, such as extraordinarily large new art museums, and artist-run spaces.

Rosalind E. Krauss has offered valuable contributions on the relation between this expanded apparatus of display and the constructions of art practice in the twenty-first century. For Krauss, the gallery space remains a key determining factor in art today. She contrasts installations that she considers inhabit the post-medium condition (because they uncritically draw upon the gallery space in order to frame objects, images, and videos drawn from contexts of life as art) with recursive practices that appropriate and critically analyse social constructs (especially the gallery space itself), mobilising them as technical supports for critical interventions, in a similar way to which a painter might more traditionally use a canvas to make a painting. Using Krauss's theory, I argue for a renewed focus upon re-ascriptions of white cube conventions within an expanded framework of artistic display. Setting out the integration of critical art practices into the institution of art in relation to questions of critical distance, I use Krauss's theory to consider the appropriation of modes of institutional critique as another technical support that artists might appropriate and subject to recursive analysis. Ultimately I draw the discussion towards David Beech's proposal that the autonomy of the gallery space might be taken as a technical support and turned to the production of forms of autonomous social action.

Chapter One sets up the social constructions of artistic autonomy, both in the context of high modernist practice and theory and in terms of the social development of white cube conventions in the context of American society within the 1950s and 1960s. I frame the successes and failures of the protest movement within this American context through Louis Althusser's re-evaluations of Karl Marx's theorisation of ideologies manufactured by institutions such as the media. Althusser contended that these material frameworks cannot simply be overcome, because of the key role they play in shaping people's psychological make-up. Thus, through Althusser's re-assessment of institutionalisation as recurring patterns of social practice, which, in relation to supporting material contexts, forge ideology, I explain the prioritisation of socio-linguistic factors in the work of a generation of conceptual and critical art practitioners, who took the apparatus of artistic production and display as their critical focus.

Key critical interventions mounted by Michael Asher and Brian O'Doherty form the backbone of his chapter. I introduce and contextualise O'Doherty's critical intervention, *Inside the White Cube* (1976), which comments upon the construction of artistic autonomy, both in terms of the practices exhibited and the production of the gallery space itself. I engage with O'Doherty's framing of exhibitions of high modernist and minimalist art in terms of relations between components of those exhibitions, such as artwork and gallery wall, whose functions are normalised through recurrent re-activation so as to invite particular modes of response. From O'Doherty's perspective, texts such as Clement Greenberg's 'Modernist Painting', which sought to historicise abstract paintings as part of a lineage of development toward the realisation of the specifically visual nature of painting as a medium, code exhibits with a pre-determined narrative of autonomy.

The key dimension, for my argument, of O'Doherty's position, is the dual function he contends the gallery walls perform; the manner in which their physical structure screens the space outside, and how the same walls read as a peripheral blur of non-referential white space, surrounding the luminous presence of the paintings hung upon them. I will, in this chapter, also set up O'Doherty's commentary upon the relation between minimalist installation and the gallery space, and consider how the critique of high modernist art undertaken by figures such as Donald Judd and Robert Morris overcame the second function but not the first, revealing the gallery space from a continuum of changing viewpoints as an empty spatial frame. I also consider two contrasting modes of viewership, *the eye* and *the spectator*, which O'Doherty argues are representative of encounters with exhibitions of high modernist art and minimalist installation. In the former, people approach the work through a purely visual sensibility, encountering the gallery as a purified white space, and in the latter, attention is brought to bear upon embodied engagement with object-based practices in the empty frame of the gallery.

Asher's installation within the exhibition 'Spaces', presented within the Museum of Modern Art New York in 1969/70, and his subsequent installation in the Gladys K Montgomery Art Centre at Pomona College in 1970, are the key case studies within this chapter. I use analysis of minimalism through attention to Donald Judd's 'Specific Objects' (1965), Robert Morris's 'Notes on Sculpture' essays (1966), and Michael Fried's

'Art and Objecthood' (1967) to frame Asher's practice in terms of the changing conception of materiality that the artist developed in critical response to such minimalist precedents, dismantling the opposition between the display object and the gallery space, and intervening within the socially determined material frame of the gallery space. I give emphasis to how these installations drew critical attention to the function of the white wall, playfully dismantling the opposition it mediated between spaces of art and life, and drawing attention to the significance of placement and the relations formed between components, producing the gallery as a signifying framework in relation to which the autonomy of displays could be constituted.

I go on to examine this aspect of his practice in the context of subsequent critical analyses of installation practices: Rosalind Krauss's 1978 essay, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', which described Asher's mode of practice as examining the axioms of the architectural structure of the gallery space, and Craig Owens' 'The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism', (1980), which framed Asher's practice through the notion of the *palimpsest*, whereby one text (the artist's intervention) is understood to function as a reading of another (the standard architectural configuration of the gallery space). These theorisations provide an explanatory framework for Michael Asher's emergent practice of institutional critique, framing his installations as socio-linguistic readings of the gallery space, in contrast to minimalist works that were encountered as material objects set apart from the functional roles that were more typically performed by the industrial materials from which they were made.

This component of the study will be further developed in Chapter Two. Through a close reading of Asher's 1974 installation within the Claire Copley Gallery, a private art dealership in Los Angeles, Chapter Two will extend the links established between Asher's installations and postmodern allegory. This installation was made by removing a wall that separated the gallery's office from its exhibition spaces. I consider the multiple contrasting interpretations that the intervention generated in order to consider the relation between critique and signification. Drawing out the framework of practice and theory developed within Brian O'Doherty's 1967 publication *Aspen 5+6*, I link Asher's installation to the categories of time, language and silence, which O'Doherty set up through the publication of George Kubler's 'Style and Representation of Historical Time' (1967), Roland Barthes' 'Death of the Author' (1967) and Susan Sontag's 'Aesthetics of

Silence' (1967), respectively. I consider how a diachronic repetition of interpretations might stabilise and sustain the function of the gallery space. Setting up the critical procedures of Asher's installation in relation to a permutational mode of interpretation that Benjamin Buchloh considers conceptualist works (such as Sol LeWitt's) invite by allowing people to enumerate an array of possible meanings, I draw links back to the coexistence of contrasting meanings within a singular work that Owens identifies with postmodern allegory. Thus, I argue that Asher's intervention unsettles layers of diachronic coding that determine the meaning of the Claire Copley Gallery at any one given moment.

Paul de Man's 'Semiology and Rhetoric' (1979), amongst other essays, was significant in the development of Owens' argument, and I use this in my argument, framing high modernist, minimalist and interventionist practices such as Asher's, in relation to de Man's contrast of literal and rhetorical (figural) meaning within language use. Through attention to Asher's notion of aesthetic use value, I consider how the gallery wall separates economic and display functions within the gallery space, zoneally drawing out and suppressing the economic and artistic value of displays. Finally, I consider how Asher addressed a diverse set of display spaces in art museums, private galleries and university art centres in the three case studies considered in Chapters One and Two, demonstrating how, by working in the kinds of institutional contexts that shaped the reception of modern and emergent postmodern art in America in the late 1960s, Asher's work functioned as a critical analysis of the ideological production of apparatuses of artistic display within this society.

Chapter Three extends this engagement with modes of allegorical critique, considering the accumulation of contextual factors and forms of mediation that, since the development of practices of institutional critique in the 1970s, have led artists and critics alike to re-formulate the terms of critical practice. The chapter opens with, and pursues throughout, the question of critical distance. I consider the reproduction and expansion of the institution of art in relation to Althusser's notion of structure (the construction of ideology through recurrences of ways of thinking, behaving and reproducing social infrastructure), weighing this against his notion of political practice as the outcome of symptomatic readings of that structure. The proximity Althusser identifies between critical practices and the objects they seek to work upon is linked to a



summary of Hal Foster's writings on postmodern critique in which a similar proximity is also evident.<sup>2</sup> I frame this analysis in relation to Asher's use of contractual agreements and documentary images as both the guarantee and record of the site-specificity of his works, demonstrating how the artist's critical gestures became implicated in these forms of contextual determination. I use this example in order to set up the introduction of James Meyer's notion of the *functional site*, a re-reading of site-specificity that focuses on the networking of material spaces through patterns of use, through which their meanings are negotiated in relation to textual/documentary representation.<sup>3</sup> The chapter seeks to outline processes of recurrence and displacement through which the institution of art has expanded since the 1970s. Using the writings of Miwon Kwon, Andrea Fraser and Hito Steyerl, I consider the integration of critical practices within the service sector. I also consider how white cube conventions have been re-assigned to produce 'downtown' and 'upscale' museum spaces in the museum boom of the late 1980s and 1990s.

I go on, in Chapter Three, to assess the effectiveness of modes of critical intervention within the context of this expanded apparatus of display. I contrast the focus upon social production in the context of relational installation with modes of recursivity developed in the post-millennial writings of Rosalind Krauss, which I align with Althusser's conception of symptomatic reading. I examine Krauss's approach to the gallery space as a set of received conventions that might be taken as a technical support for practices of critical reflection. in the context of two case studies. The first is 'Voids: A Retrospective', a show that re-staged a series of historical instances wherein artists exhibited empty gallery spaces as their own art practice; the second is Michael Asher's 2009 Santa Monica Museum of Art installation, in which the artist re-staged all of the temporary wall studs ever produced within the museum. Both of these exhibitions used the repetition of historical constructs in order to reflect upon how histories of

---

<sup>2</sup> See Hal Foster, 'Postmodernism: A Preface', in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Washington: Bay Press, 1983), pp. ix-xvi; Hal Foster, 'Re-Post', in Brian Wallis and Marcia Tucker, eds., *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation, Documentary Sources in Contemporary Art, I* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), pp. 189–201; Hal Foster, 'Whatever Happened to PostModernism?', in Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1996), pp. 205–226.

<sup>3</sup> James Meyer, 'Functional Site; or the Transformation of Site-Specificity', in *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*, ed. by Erika Suderburg (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 23–35.

architectural production can provide a set of critical tools through which the respective artists could appraise the function of the site itself. In relation to David Beech's text, 'Autonomy v Barbarism' (2007), I argue that these exhibitions invite people to re-appropriate these sites of artistic display as spaces of critique, contrasting the framing of the gallery space as a site of convivial social interaction within relational installations.

The status of the gallery space is then, I argue, as much about how it is perceived as it is about how it is materially constructed. The manner in which the gallery space frames artistic reception makes it an object of ideology, a status that critical art practitioners have sought to contest since the late 1960s. Since this point of emergence, white cube conventions have become an increasingly mobile set of conventions, which, because of the depth of their history, have allowed an increasing range of architectural contexts to be transformed into sites of artistic display. Furthermore, practices of critique have become part of the institution of art, creating a situation where criticality itself needs to be re-thought in relation to the layering of histories and conventions out of which it has developed as a mode of practice. By examining this territory and the potentials for critical intervention within it, I aim, in this study, to fulfil that requirement.

## Chapter One: Exhibition as Medium

### Introduction

As the 1970s began, Michael Asher presented two near-concurrent installations; one in the 'Spaces' exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (30<sup>th</sup> December 1969 – 1<sup>st</sup> March 1970) and the other in the Gladys K. Montgomery Art Center at Pomona College (13<sup>th</sup> February – 8<sup>th</sup> March 1970).<sup>4</sup> Seeming to expand to an architectural scale the cuboid objects that minimalists such as Robert Morris and Donald Judd had earlier produced as investigations of material structure, what Asher's installations actually produced was a set of direct interventions into the architectural structures of their host galleries—interventions that critiqued the function of the gallery space itself. Six years later, the critic and artist Brian O'Doherty published three essays in *Artforum* that presented a similar critique: O'Doherty, examining the convention of the by-then ubiquitous white cube gallery, asserted that both artwork and site functioned as mutually-supportive components of a broader structure of display—the modern art exhibition.<sup>5</sup> This analysis, I contend, is supported by Rosalind Krauss's corresponding theorisation of installation and land art practices 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' (1978).<sup>6</sup> Emerging, then, against a backdrop of political and theoretical reconceptualisations of the ways in which institutions function within society (the 1968 Paris riots; the lobbying of art museums by artist groups<sup>7</sup>), the works of Asher, O'Doherty and Krauss contribute to a larger critical debate about the role of the gallery in the production, presentation and reception of art. It is my argument here that Krauss's and O'Doherty's theoretical work provides the most cogent means by which to examine both the structure of Asher's practice at this time and the critique that his interventions

<sup>4</sup> Michael Asher, *Writings 1973-1983 on Works 1969-79*, ed. by Benjamin Buchloh (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983).

<sup>5</sup> Brian O'Doherty, 'Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space, Part I', *Artforum*, 14:7 (March 1976), 24-30; 'Inside the White Cube, Part II: The Eye and the Spectator', *Artforum*, 14:8 (April 1976), 26-34; 'Inside the White Cube Part III: Context as Content', *Artforum*, 15:3 (November 1976), 38-44.

<sup>6</sup> Rosalind Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', *October*, 8 (Spring 1979), 30-44.

<sup>7</sup> For example, the emergence of the New Left as a driving force in the American protest movement; see *The New Left Revisited*, ed. John McMillian, and Paul Buhle (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003). One might also consider the way in which artists began during this time to organise themselves into protest groups such as The Art Worker's Coalition and the Guerilla Art Action Group. See Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009).

posed to the museum and gallery spaces in which they were presented.

## 1. Art Versus Life

To intervene, at this particular historical moment, within the bounding frame of the gallery space—as did Asher—was to intervene in the limit that this frame drew between modes of artistic reception and the forms of alienated life that were dominated by private property and wage labour, as wrought by the modernisations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To make this claim is to contextualise Asher's practice in relation to Peter Bürger's retrospective theorisation of the avant-garde. Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-garde* (1974) set out to theoretically account for the historical emergence of avant-garde art in the first decades of the twentieth century, a context in which, for the first time in history, art had become a mode of production divorced from the broader functioning of society. Bürger argued that art could now be referred to as a social institution, which he described as the 'productive and distributive apparatus, and also the ideas about art that prevail at a given time and that determine the reception of works.'<sup>8</sup> He sets out this separation of art and life in terms of a segregation of needs:

All those needs that cannot be satisfied in everyday life, because the principle of competition pervades all spheres, can find a home in art, because art is removed from the praxis of life. Values such as humanity, joy, truth, solidarity are extruded from life, as it were, and are preserved in art.<sup>9</sup>

Bürger writes from within a Marxist framework, and his reference to praxis can be rooted in Marx's construction of the term as 'practical critical activity' in his *Theses on Feuerbach* (1844-5).<sup>10</sup> For Marx, our understanding of ourselves, the world and our

---

<sup>8</sup> Peter Bürger, 1984, p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>10</sup> Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, in Lawrence H. Simon, ed., *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994), p. 99. In his final thesis, Marx states, 'The Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is, to *change* it.' (Ibid, p. 101.) In constructing this approach, Marx is reacting against Hegel's conception of the dialectic, in which 'Consciousness recognises that it is the *untruth* occurring in perception that falls within it [and thus] by this very recognition it is able at once to supersede this untruth' (G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 72.) Marx describes this Hegelian outlook as

place within it is a social construction that issues directly from our material circumstances. Yet, as we can see from the contradictions identified by Bürger in his segregation of needs (art versus the praxis of life), this understanding is always limited because it corresponds with the conflicted situation from which it forms. Nevertheless, on Marx's reading, we are capable of recognising such contradictions and forming a praxis that might work upon them. In the Afterword to the second edition of *Capital*, he states,

In its rational form [the dialectic] is a scandal and an abomination to the bourgeoisie and its doctrinaire spokesman, because it includes in its positive understanding of what exists a simultaneous recognition of its negation, its inevitable destruction; because it regards every historically developed form as being in a fluid state, in motion, and therefore grasps the transient aspect as well; and because it does not let itself be impressed by anything, being in its very essence critical and revolutionary.<sup>11</sup>

Michael Asher's re-displacements of gallery architecture sought to draw out the contradictions inherent within the institutional production of artistic display in America in the late 1960s – the ongoing production of the status of art in bourgeois society: its autonomy. Bürger writes,

[T]he *autonomy of art* is a category of bourgeois society. It permits the description of art's detachment from the context of practical life as a historical development – that among the members of those classes which, at least at times, are free from the pressures of the need for survival, a sensuousness could evolve that was not part of any means-ends relationships.<sup>12</sup>

The development of aestheticist modes of production and the historical emergence of

---

resulting in 'nothing but *abstraction*' and he inverts the model, so that instead of explaining the progression of thought—a totality of all individual perceptions and experiences—through history, the dialectic becomes a means of analysing the material world. (Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, in Lawrence H. Simon, ed., *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994), p. 94.) Regarding sections critiquing Hegel's dialectical method see the section, 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy in General', pp. 79-81.

<sup>11</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. by Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976), p. 103.

<sup>12</sup> Bürger, 1984, p. 46.

the art museum facilitated this development of art's autonomous status by determining the 'relative disassociation of the work of art from the praxis of life in bourgeois society.'<sup>13</sup> Within this context, the mode of production and reception of aestheticist art is construed to be individual, cultivating a mythology of both the artist and the beholder as individual self-determining and self-governing subjects.<sup>14</sup> In Bürger's analysis, aestheticist artworks 'made the element that defines art as an institution the essential content of works.'<sup>15</sup>

The development of these practices was complemented by the emergence of the art museum. Following the opening of the Louvre in Paris in 1793, new museums opened in several major European cities—the Royal Museum in Brussels (1803), the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (1808), the Academia in Venice (1817), the Brera in Milan (1818), the Prado in Madrid (1819), the National Gallery in London (1824), the Altes Museum in Berlin (1830) and the Hermitage in St. Petersburg (1852).<sup>16</sup> With this change in the infrastructure of these cities, artistic reception was systematically integrated within an institutional framework of display constructed behind the walls of these museums. Tony Bennett refers to this development in terms of an emergence of what he calls *the exhibitionary complex*, a historically developing set of conventions and expectations through which public exhibitions became integral components of the production of social inclusion.<sup>17</sup> Bennett identifies a relation between the individual encounter with the exhibition space and the production of perceptions of social inclusion. For Bennett, exhibitions such as The Great Exhibition (or, more fully, 'The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations') at Crystal Palace 'consisted in relations between the public and the exhibits so that, while everyone could see, they could also be seen, thus combining the functions of spectacle and surveillance' (Fig.

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Bürger also cites the emergence of the aesthetic as an independent philosophical category in eighteenth century enlightenment philosophy as a point of emergence for the development of art's status in terms of autonomy.

<sup>14</sup> This construction was supported by the critical reception of European modernist paintings by practitioners such as Gauguin and Matisse, whose works, according to the theories of Clive Bell and Roger Fry, were valued for the forms of sensuous encounter their harmonious configurations of shape and colour supported, rather than their representational content.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), p. 20.

<sup>17</sup> Tony Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, ed. by Bruce W. Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 82.



1).<sup>18</sup> Such exhibitions, that is, presented works that facilitated sensuous and individuated modes of encounter within environments in which the visitor could witness her own inclusion within a larger social body, view the cultural achievements of that social body and become aware of her rights and responsibilities as part of it; she was reminded of her status as an individual, her inclusion within a general public and her membership of a particular nation-state.



Fig. 1, William Simpson, *Owen Jones' scheme for the decoration of the Great Exhibition building*, pen, ink and watercolour, 1850.

The galleries in which Asher intervened were designed to support individual encounters with aestheticist modes of practice. Citing a shift from representational to abstract forms of art in the early twentieth century, Bürger contrasts 'creations removed from the life praxis of the bourgeois, even though they still claim to interpret that praxis', towards 'aestheticism, finally, where bourgeois art reaches the stage of self reflection [and] this claim is no longer made.'<sup>19</sup> The 'apartness' of art from bourgeois society now becomes its content.<sup>20</sup> Thus artistic production and reception became specialised practice one more area of life that is parcelled up and packaged; the complement and contrast of work life. In these terms aestheticist art can be linked to the division of labour within society as a whole, mediated by the gallery walls as the point of separation of opposing modes of encounter and production.<sup>21</sup> The creative freedom to

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p 87.

<sup>19</sup> Bürger, 1984, p. 48.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid..

<sup>21</sup> Marx and Engels develop the division of labour capitalism in *The German Ideology*. They state, 'As capitalist societies become increasingly advanced, the roles of individual workers become increasingly specialised and thus closed off from other areas of activity. [...] as soon as the division of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from

explore the sensuous qualities of artworks within the gallery offered contrast to what Marx understood to be the experience of the wage-labourer, whose work is not their own, and consequentially exists in a state of self-alienation. The worker also experiences the product of her labour as a commodity—a form of property to be consumed—or as Marx notes, 'as an alien object dominating him.'<sup>22</sup> Alienation, then, serves as the modality for the praxis of life under capitalism, because workers have to understand their own productive capacity in terms of monetary remuneration. It is these circumstances against which I have claimed Michael Asher reacted. By intervening within the bounding frame of the gallery space, Asher critically questioned the manner in which sensuous immediacy is circumscribed within the apparatus of artistic display, yet systematically excluded from the life praxis beyond the museum walls, which is structured through the division of labour, private property and wage labour.

## 2. The Historical Emergence of the White Cube Gallery

The gallery spaces in New York and California within which Asher intervened are best described as white cube galleries; their common set of design conventions included a cuboid structure, white walls, controlled lighting, and buffering lobbies and corridors that connected points of entry and exit to the rest of the building—the cumulative effect of which was intended to produce a quiet, contemplative ambience. Asher's installations were intended to draw attention to and analyse how such spaces were designed and how they operated: by disrupting certain characteristics (the internal electronic lighting, the distinct enclosure and seclusion of the space of artistic display) while retaining others (the clean, white, perfectly finished wall surfaces), he immersed his audience into an environment that was at once both alien and familiar. The highly controlled and conventionalised exhibition space became de-familiarised and thus unexpectedly remarkable.

Asher's work, then, is a reflection upon the social function of the institutional

---

which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood.' Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology: Part One* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970), p. 54.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

framework of artistic display in his contemporary America. In the late 1960s, that equated to a set of design conventions that were subsequently termed 'the white cube' by the artist and critic Brian O'Doherty.<sup>23</sup> Visitors to exhibitions of modern art in the postwar period increasingly found themselves occupying the types of spaces that Asher was to explore and O'Doherty to describe, and by 1970 they had long been commonplace. The gallery Asher worked with in 'Spaces' was a forerunner of this model of gallery design, being part of Philip Goodwin's 1939 design for the Museum of Modern Art, New York: Goodwin's plan featured a flat glass-and-steel edifice that created a clean division between the street outside and the galleries within, providing what John Coolidge described as a 'benevolently neutral background' that succeeded through its deference to the works on display.<sup>24</sup> With their clean white walls, adjustable lighting systems, polished floors and sparse furnishings, these spaces later provided an influential template for gallery design that informed the development of a museum and gallery infrastructure both within New York and beyond. During this period, this format of gallery design extended beyond public gallery spaces like MoMA to inform the development of several high profile private gallery spaces—Sam Kootz gallery opened in 1945, followed in 1946 by Charles Egan Gallery, and Betty Parsons and Andre Emmerich Gallery in 1954, and Leo Castelli Gallery in 1957 (Fig. 2).

---

<sup>23</sup> Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986)

<sup>24</sup> John Coolidge, *Patrons and Architects: Designing Art Museums in the Twentieth Century* (Fort Worth, Texas: Amon Carter Museum, 1989), p. 81.

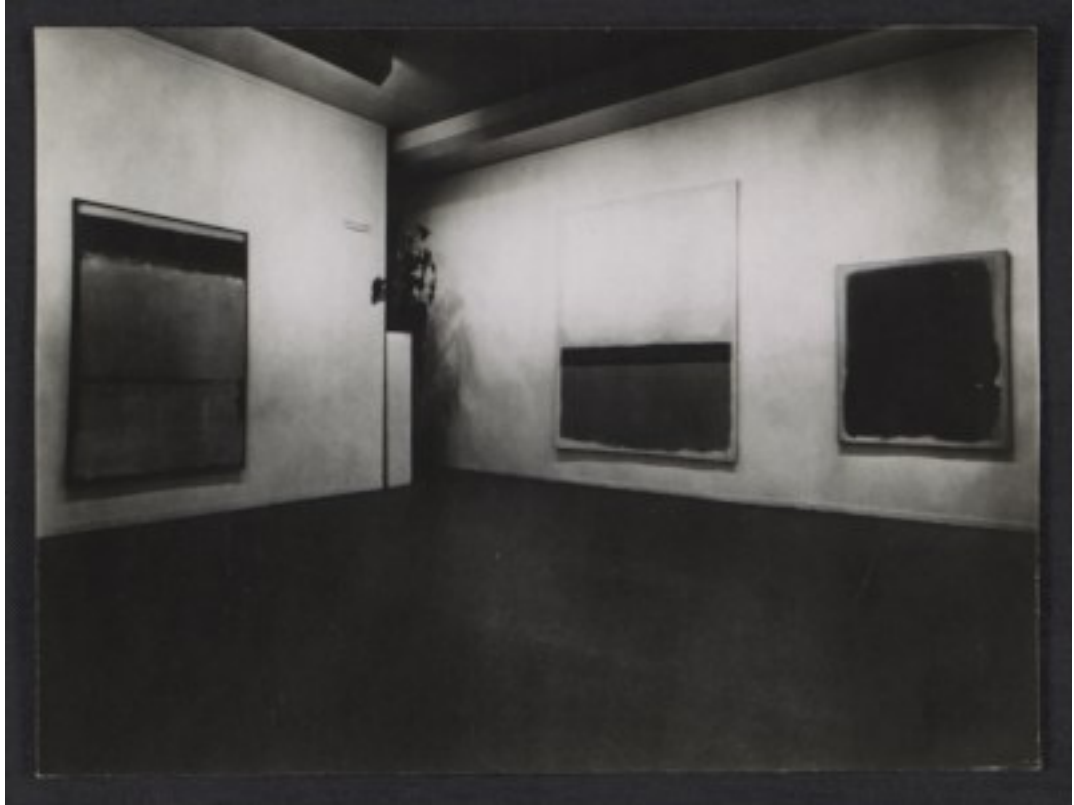


Fig. 2, Mark Rothko exhibition installation, 1952 at the Betty Parsons Gallery, New York

### 3. The Avant-Garde and the Neo-Avant-Garde

Asher's practice of the white cube gallery emerged out of a history of avant-gardist attacks on the autonomy of art within bourgeois society. The separation of art from life produced through the inter-relation of aestheticist art and an established museum infrastructure produced a scenario in the aftermath of World War One whereby the historical avant-gardes were able to negate art as an institution. Through acts of provocation avant-gardist artists envisaged a transformation of the life praxis on the basis of needs currently encountered within the field of art. Bürger says,

it is not the aim of the avant-gardistes to integrate art *into* this praxis. On the contrary, they assent to the aestheticists' rejection of the world and its means-ends rationality. What distinguishes them from the latter is the aim to organise a new life praxis from the basis in art. In this respect also, Aestheticism turns out

to have been the necessary precondition of the avant-garde intent.<sup>25</sup>

Bürger directly links the historical avant-gardes with the dialectical process through which Marx comprehends historical change. Here 'the disjointure of the work and the praxis of life'<sup>26</sup> serves as a framework against which artists like Marcel Duchamp could react, in the same way that Marx argues that any given set of circumstances is open to a negative critique that might lead to its own overcoming, a process that, following Hegel, Bürger refers to as 'sublation'.<sup>27</sup> Bürger argues, for example, that Duchamp's readymades, produced through the nomination of mass-produced objects as works of art, represent a radical negation of the category of individual creation.<sup>28</sup> The problem for Bürger is that such movements never brought about a new life praxis. He notes this in his analysis of Duchamp claiming that,

It is obvious that this kind of provocation cannot be repeated indefinitely. The provocation depends on what it turns against. Here it is the idea that the individual is the subject of artistic creation. Once the signed bottle has been accepted as an object that deserves its place in the museum, the provocation no longer provokes; it turns into its opposite. If an artist today signs a stove pipe and exhibits it, that artist certainly does not denounce the art market but adapts to it.<sup>29</sup>

This captures the sense of shifting parameters of the contexts to which critical practices must attend if they are not to simply coalesce with the circumstances that they seek to critique; and this is the criticism that Bürger directs at post-war avant-garde art, which he considered 'revived the category of work'.<sup>30</sup> He claimed that 'the procedures invented by the avant-garde with anti-artistic intent are being used for artistic ends', demonstrating that 'art has not been integrated into the praxis of life, art as an institution

---

<sup>25</sup> Bürger, 1984, p. 49.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>28</sup> Avant-gardist work, then, coming out of a practice directed against art as an institution, could not be considered positively as *work* on the terms of this institution, i.e., as an individually-produced unities of form and content. Furthermore, Bürger considers groups such as the Dadas as not constituting movements producing art in a particular style; instead, he refers to the avant-gardist 'manifestation'. Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

continues to survive as something separate from the praxis of life.<sup>31</sup> The institutionalisation of the avant-garde leads, Bürger argues, to the emergence of a new phase of art practice, the neo-avant-garde, which,

institutionalises the *avant-garde as art* and thus negates genuinely avant-gardist intentions. [...] Neo-avant-gardist art is autonomous art in the full sense of the term, which means that it negates the avant-gardiste intention of returning art to the praxis of life. And the efforts to sublate art become artistic manifestations that, despite their producers' intentions, take on the character of works.<sup>32</sup>

This is a terse assessment, although, as the literary and critical theorist Andreas Huyssen comments, its sentiments are reflected in the institutional presence of Duchamp's practice in America—for example, his retrospectives at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1963 and in the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1966—which then cast a shadow over an emergent generation of critically focused conceptual artists.<sup>33</sup> In a changed social context in which Huyssen claims artists had to 'face a technologically and economically fully developed media culture which had mastered the high art of integrating, diffusing, and marketing even the most serious challenges', critical gestures directed against art as an institution were likely to be absorbed by it and work towards its affirmation.<sup>34</sup> Yet the art historian Hal Foster also claims that 'this failure of the transgressive avant-garde [...] is not total; at bare minimum it prompts a practical critique of the institution of art'.<sup>35</sup> Asher's generation comprehended that their own critical gestures were made from within art's institutional framework, leading them, in the words of art historian Alexander Alberro, to confront 'the institution of art with the claim that it was not sufficiently committed to, let alone realising or fulfilling, the pursuit of publicness that

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid..

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>33</sup> Andreas Huyssen, 'The Search for Tradition: Avant-Garde and Postmodernism in the 1970s', *New German Critique*, 22, *Special Issue on Modernism* (Winter, 1981), 23-40, p. 32. Huyssen also refers to the importance of the found object in the practices of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, which emerged in the 1950s. Bürger also makes explicit reference to the pop art of Andy Warhol (1984: 61).

<sup>34</sup> Huyssen, 1981, p. 32.

<sup>35</sup> Hal Foster, 'The Crux of Minimalism', in *Individuals: A Selected History of Contemporary Art 1945-1986*, ed. by Howard Singerman (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986), p. 180.



had brought it into existence in the first place.<sup>136</sup>

#### 4. High Modernism and the Challenge of Minimalism

Asher's practice can be seen, then, to have developed in a critical relationship with a particular apparatus of artistic display that was in turn dominated by a body of high modernist art criticism, in which Clement Greenberg was the key figure that radicalised artistic reception as a mode of individual encounter. In his 1939 essay, *Avant-Garde and Kitsch*, Greenberg argues that two forms of cultural production had emerged within advanced capitalist societies as a result of the division of labour that, he argued, had resulted in a divided and contested cultural sphere. Kitsch, he claimed, was one: magazine covers, pulp fiction comics, advertisements, and Hollywood films—culture produced on an industrial scale, offering only 'vicarious experiences and faked sensations'.<sup>37</sup> The other was the avant-garde: in this, Greenberg believed, 'Western bourgeois society had produced something unheard of heretofore'.<sup>38</sup> As part of its process of specialisation, Greenberg argued, avant-garde art had succeeded in 'detaching itself from society', leaving revolution 'inside society'.<sup>39</sup> He considered that the political dimension of his version of the avant-garde was internal to the works of its exponents, and claimed that the task of the avant-garde was to 'keep culture *moving* in the midst of ideological confusion and violence'.<sup>40</sup> Already at this early stage, Greenberg identified this process with abstraction grounded in medium specificity. 'In turning his attention away from subject matter of common experience, the poet or artist turns it upon the medium of his own craft'.<sup>41</sup> Thus, avant-garde art was a political defence of culture against the mass-produced semblance offered by kitsch. The significance of this defence of culture in contrast to the overtly socio-political aspirations of Bürger's notion of the

---

<sup>36</sup> Alexander Alberro, 'Institutions, Critique and Institutional Critique', in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds., *Institutional Critique: an Anthology of Artists' Writings* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 2009), pp. 2-19, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Clement Greenberg, 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', *Partisan Review*, New York, VI:5 (Fall 1939), 34-49, p. 38.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*.

avant-garde lay in the social importance of the cultural sphere.<sup>42</sup>

To act in the defence of artistic quality as Greenberg did in this defence of modernism was also to link a sense of culture as the full realisation of human experience. This approach resonated with the promotion of the value of the individual within society that informed related debates on culture at this time. In an article entitled 'Museums and World Peace', the poet and writer Archibald MacLeish argued that 'the work to be done is the work of building *in men's minds* the image of the world which now exists in fact *outside* their minds – the whole single world of which all men are citizens together.'<sup>43</sup> These sentiments were also conveyed in the exhibition 'The Family of Man' (1955) held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, a show that featured documentary photographs of people from countries around the world engaged in purportedly universal activities.<sup>44</sup>



Fig. 3, *The Family of Man*, (installation view), Museum of Modern Art New York, 1955.

<sup>42</sup> In his book, *Keywords* (1976), Raymond Williams, examining the term 'culture', refers to Cicero's '*cultura animi*' (the cultivation of the soul), arguing that this notion of tending and growth resonated through nineteenth-century usage. This is reflected in the increasingly class-based manner in which the agendas of the emergent field of art museums were communicated at that time. (Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 87.) Sir Henry Cole, founder of the South Kensington Museum, urged other institutions to remain open into the evenings to allow the 'working man [to] get his refreshment there in the company of his wife and children'; don't, he exhorted, 'leave him to find his recreation in bed first, and in the public house afterwards'. (Sir Henry Cole, *Fifty Years of Public Work, Vol 2*, (London: George Bell, 1884), p. 368, as quoted in Andrew McClellan, 2008, p. 23.)

<sup>43</sup> Archibald MacLeish, 'Museums and World Peace', *Museum News*, 23 (February 1946), p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> McClellan, 2008, p. 39.

Yet, in the broader curatorial project of the museum, under the leadership of Alfred H. Barr, this exhibition served as the exception to the collection's focus on modernist abstraction. Barr took a systematic approach to defining a historical trajectory for modernist art, leading him to adorn the cover of the catalogue for the 1936 exhibition 'Cubism and Abstract Art' with a diagram that charted its historical development as Barr saw it – privileging technically progressive practices, whilst paying little regard to practices that Bürger characterised as avant-gardist.

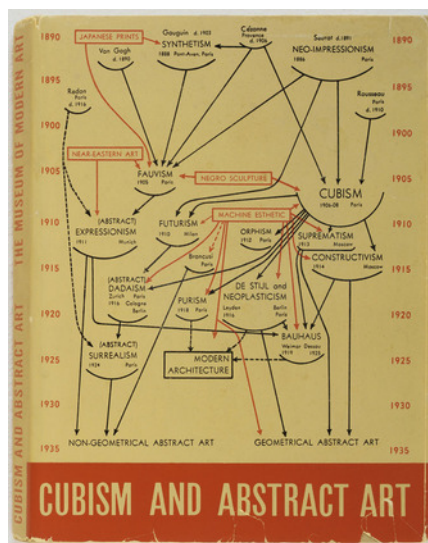


Fig. 4, Alfred H. Barr Jr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, Museum of Modern Art, hardback book, 1936.

Greenberg's position developed alongside that of figures like Alfred H. Barr, and, over time, his model of the avant-garde as the historical agency that functions to keep culture alive in the face of capitalism shifted towards a defence of formalist painting and sculpture. After the 1961 publication of his collected criticism, *Art and Culture*, his views on modernist art, along with those of critics such as Michael Fried, coalesced into a dominant paradigm of art practice and criticism. This paradigm has come to be termed 'high', because the debates that structured it were oriented towards the isolation and exemplification of tendencies within the disciplines of painting and sculpture, as these critics understood them, towards the production of abstract works, the physical structures of which had become subordinate to the viewer's experience of them as luminous fields of colour. In his 1960 essay, 'Modernist Painting' (reprinted in 1965), Greenberg said that such works were capable of revealing the nature of man's

visual sensibility because they offered a 'purely optical experience as against optical experience modified or revised by tactile associations'.<sup>45</sup> Here, the critic sought to demonstrate a continuity of development within modernist painting that he considered was driven by artists' criticisms of their own work against the inherent characteristics of the medium itself. 'The essence of Modernism lies [...] in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself... Each art had to determine, through its own operations [...] the effects exclusive to itself.'<sup>46</sup> By the 1960s, Greenberg thought that artists such as Jules Olitski were the most advanced exponents of this self-critical tendency – a tendency that had led them to produce works that were comprised of abstract pictorial fields that Greenberg considered conveyed 'two constitutive norms or conventions of painting – flatness and the delimitation of flatness'.<sup>47</sup> Works like Olitski's comprised spray-painted fields of colour that generated an indeterminate pictorial space, or what Greenberg described as an 'optical third dimension'<sup>48</sup> (Fig. 5.) According to Greenberg, such works held out to the viewer the possibility of examining the grounds of visual experience: the projective, weightless and synchronous nature of sight. As such, Greenberg's criticism focused upon the pictorial field of the work and the optical nature of the encounter. The attempted neutrality of the modern art gallery and the seclusion offered by such spaces made them appear to be the most appropriate setting for exhibitions of high modernist art.

---

<sup>45</sup> Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting', reprinted in *Art & Literature*, Lugano, 4 (Spring 1965), p 192.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p 193.

<sup>47</sup> Clement Greenberg, 'After Abstract Expressionism', in *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4, Modernism with a Vengeance 1957-1969*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 21-33, p 121.

<sup>48</sup> Greenberg, 1965, p. 195.



Fig. 5, Jules Olitski, *Instant Loveland*, acrylic on canvas, 295 x 646 cm, 1968

By 1967, when Asher was working, this paradigm was under serious challenge. New forms of minimalist work had emerged that sought to engage gallery visitors with the spatial and material structure of the site they occupied, which in turn led to the emergence of environmental works such as Asher's. A set of debates around the kind of space that modern art galleries immersed visitors within also emerged, where it was argued that such spaces had specifically developed as facilitatory frameworks for encounters with high modernist art. In 'Modernist Painting', Greenberg had identified a self-critical tendency that had driven the medium to 'confine itself exclusively to what is given in visual experience', a tendency which led, he argued, to the development of works that were encountered as luminous fields, and thus offered viewers a 'purely optical experience'.<sup>49</sup> The interpretative frameworks initiated by these norms of high modernism were in evidence, for example, in Michael Fried's catalogue discussion of Jules Olitski's 1967 Corcoran Gallery exhibition. In his introductory essay, Fried argued that Olitski's paintings 'atomised colour, [and] atomized, even disintegrated, the picture surface as well'.<sup>50</sup> In his 1966 discussion of these tendencies in high modernist abstraction, Fried also identified a 'new, exclusively visual mode of illusionism [...] a space accessible to eyesight alone which, so to speak, specifically belongs to the art of painting'.<sup>51</sup> The mode of encounter such arguments advocated was summarised by

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 193-194.

<sup>50</sup> Michael Fried, 'Jules Olitski', originally published in *Jules Olitski: Paintings 1963-67*, (Washington DC: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1967), and reprinted in Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 135.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Fried, 'Shape as Form: Frank Stella's New Paintings', *Artforum*, Volume no. 3, November

Francis Frascina as an 'instantaneous and disinterested apprehension of aesthetic quality [that] involves recognition of a manifest presence of immediately apprehended complexity: this complexity is internal to the self-critical and specialised nature of the medium involved'.<sup>52</sup> Within these arguments, the attention of each viewer is understood to be compelled by the arresting presence of the luminous shape the work projects into their visual field, which is grasped in an instant and forms an unchanging presence for the duration of the encounter. Such encounters were understood to transcend and thus exclude all contextual considerations and all the modulations of circumstance surrounding them. Thus, these arguments assumed both that each viewer would constitute a static contemplative figure before the work, and that in the eye of such a beholder, the gallery wall, as vertical material support, would melt away from view.

This construction of artistic reception came under increasingly vigorous challenge with the emergence of minimalist artworks that pronounced their materiality, thus rejecting the focus on illusion and opticality in high modernist criticism. Donald Judd's emergence onto the New York art scene with his 1963 Green Gallery exhibition brought an admiring assessment from Michael Fried, who was nevertheless 'unable to discover a convincing internal rationale for the particular decisions of style and structure Judd has made'.<sup>53</sup>

Judd set out his position in an analysis of three-dimensionality and material specificity in his 1965 essay, 'Specific Objects'<sup>54</sup>. Here, Judd championed a new approach to art-making, or what he called three-dimensional work, examples of which, he argued, conveyed their material or phenomenal condition thanks to a mode of construction that, through a minimisation of constitutive elements, emphasised their own object-like quality and the materials used in their making. The context of presentation was also significant in enabling the works to be characterised in terms of their objecthood. Judd wrote, 'The thing as a whole, its quality as a whole, is what is interesting. The main things are alone and more intense clear and powerful.'<sup>55</sup> His own

---

1966, pp. 18-27. Reprinted in Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 1998, p. 79.

<sup>52</sup> Francis Frascina, 'Inside the Last Great American Whale: The Politics of Modernism', *Circa*, 46 (Jul-Aug 1989), 3-22, pp.16-17.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Fried, 'New York Letter: Judd', *Art International*, 8:1 (February 1964), 26.

<sup>54</sup> Donald Judd, 'Specific Objects', *Arts Yearbook*, 8 (1965): Reprinted in Donald Judd, *Complete Writings 1959 – 1975* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design: New York University Press, 1975).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.



works of the period were consistent with this analysis, consisting of modular arrangements of industrially fabricated boxes and stacks, presented in relation to their architectural context. In a 1966 exhibition at the Dwan Gallery, New York, Judd presented *Untitled* (1966), a row of six forty-inch cubes attached to the rear wall of the gallery, separated from one another and from the side walls of the gallery by intervals that were wide enough for visitors to register, yet narrow enough for the cubes to read as a set (Fig. 6). The five visible surfaces of each cube were made of dull, metallic galvanised steel, and the modular configuration of the cubes themselves was framed by the rear wall of the gallery.<sup>56</sup> In her analysis of the exhibition, Ellen Mandelbaum emphasised how the cubes co-existed with the gallery space: 'The viewer must become aware of himself, the object, and he must also become aware of the space between himself and the object, and this space is continuous with the gallery.'<sup>57</sup>

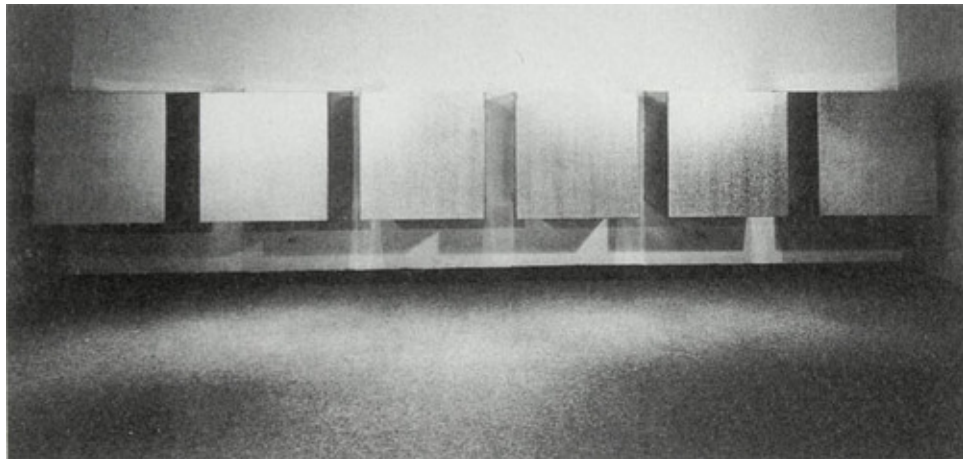


Fig.6, Donald Judd, *Untitled*, galvanised iron, six units, each unit 102 x 102 x 102 cm with 25 cm intervals, 1966.

As minimalism emerged as a critical force in subsequent years, it became apparent that Judd and his peers sought to engage people who encountered their works by dynamically engaging them with the architectural context of display, in a manner that was directly opposed to the high modernist construction of viewership. The blunt physicality and basic shapes of minimalist works invited people to move around them

<sup>56</sup> Similarly, *Untitled* (1967), which was first exhibited in the Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, in 1967, consisted of slim cuboid units of lacquer-coated galvanised iron, attached to gallery walls in precise vertical configurations. The units were evenly spaced between the floor and ceiling at regular intervals that were identical to the height of the units themselves.

<sup>57</sup> Ellen Mandelbaum, 'Isolable Units, Unity, and Difficulty', *Art Journal* 27, 3 (Spring, 1968), 256-261, 270, pp. 260-261.

and explore the resultant shifting interactions of their planes, rather than behind them as and from a static point. The materiality and spatial configuration of the work and site were brought by the minimalists into a reciprocal interaction, transforming the gallery space into an integral aspect of the viewer's encounter with the work. Robert Morris outlined this new dynamic interaction of site and work in 'Notes on Sculpture: Part II', in which he claimed that the deployment of simple geometric forms, like regular polyhedrons, in his own works, was intended to reject internal relationships: the shapes, instead, were to be apprehended as gestalts in the visual field of the perceiver. They were characterised by a unitary nature and a perceptual cohesion that maximised contextual integration. He observed, 'The object itself is carefully placed in these new conditions to be but one of the terms', but also emphasised that '[t]he object has not become less important. It has merely become less self-important.'<sup>58</sup>

In his 1964 Green Gallery installation, Morris presented a series of three-dimensional plywood cuboids and a triangular corner piece, which, like Judd, he chose because he thought their simplicity lent them maximum perceptual cohesion. (Fig. 7) '[S]impler forms [...] create strong gestalt sensations. [...] In the simpler regular polyhedrons, such as cubes and pyramids, one need not move around the object for the sense of the whole, the gestalt to occur. One sees and immediately 'believes' that the pattern within one's mind corresponds to the existential fact of the object.'<sup>59</sup> The sense of perceptual cohesiveness that Morris sought to exemplify through the structures that he deployed within the Green Gallery drew upon the ideas of gestalt psychology that he cited in his article. In his analysis of this theory of experience the art theorist Harold Osborne noted,

The gestalt school [...] argued that perception at its most elementary level involves awareness of internal order and relation among parts or aspects of unitary wholes. Association is not an event added to immediate experience but an after-effect of organization phenomenally present in immediate experience.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> Robert Morris, 'Notes on Sculpture: Part II', *Artforum* 5:2 (Oct, 1966), 20-3. Reprinted in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, Gregory Battcock, ed. (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co, 1968), p. 234.

<sup>59</sup> Robert Morris, 'Notes on Sculpture: Part I', *Artforum*, 4:6 (February 1966), 42-44. Reprinted in Battcock, 1968, p. 226.

<sup>60</sup> Harold Osborne, 'Artistic Unity and Gestalt', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 14:56 (July 1964), 214-228, p 215.

Judd and Morris shared an interest in wholeness, both in terms of unitary physical structure and in the projection of a cohesive shape in the viewer's visual field that yielded a contextual relationship with the work's architectural setting. This meant that they performed, therefore, a critique of high modernist art from within the context of the art gallery, set apart, as it was, from the wider life praxis.

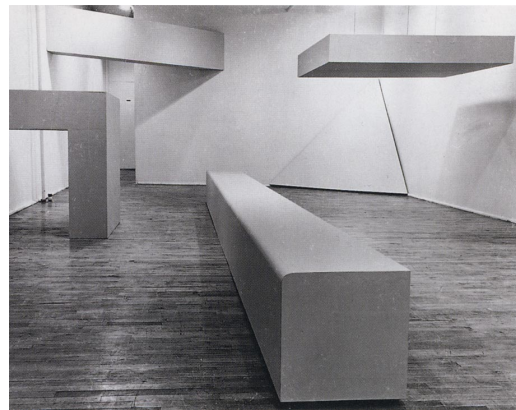


Fig. 7, Robert Morris, installation at Green Gallery, New York, 1964.

Minimalism represented another threat to the legacy of high modernism, in that, by approaching the condition of objecthood, its works exceeded the distinct areas of competence that defined artistic media within modernism. Greenberg made a historicist reading of modernism, identifying a continuity of development based on the ability of individual artists to respond to the standards of quality specific to their chosen medium, as set by the achievements of previous artists.<sup>61</sup> Greenberg said, 'Nothing could be further from the authentic art of our time than the idea of a rupture with the past of art, and without the need and compulsion to maintain standards of excellence, such a thing as Modernist art would be impossible.'<sup>62</sup> Contemporary practice thus bore the weight of

<sup>61</sup> A similar historicist theory was outlined in Michael Fried's 'Three American Painters', in *Three American Painters: Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Frank Stella*; Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, 21 April - 30 May 1965 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 1-59.

<sup>62</sup> Greenberg, 1965, p 195. Michael Fried was even more explicit in this respect: '[S]omething like a dialectic of modernism has in effect been working in the visual arts for roughly a century now. [...] The chief function of the dialectic of modernism in the visual arts has been to provide a principle by which painting can change, transform and renew itself.' Writing here in the catalogue for an exhibition of works by Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, and Frank Stella, Fried concluded that '[T]he work of a relatively few painters appears more advanced, more radical in its criticism of the modernist art of the recent past, than any other contemporary work.' Fried felt modernism was dialectical, for during this epoch a lineage of self-critical development was discernible within the visual arts. At each stage, what Fried considered to be advanced practitioners had addressed their practices to the canon of existing works within their medium and clarified their understanding of the requirements that medium made upon their own work, if it were to

history so as to advance the medium in which it was realised, and this meant further clarifying that area of competence and honing the methodologies characteristic of that medium. This cycle of development therefore followed a linear trajectory throughout the twentieth century as, according to Greenberg, practitioners continually attempted to exceed the prior achievements of others. According to the logic of this position, then, minimalist works ruptured that developmental path.

Michael Fried's 'Art and Objecthood' (1967) was a retroactive response to the manner in which then well-established forms of minimalist practice jeopardised this process. Fried claimed that by 1967 the reductivist tendency within high modernist painting had led it to a juncture where the key concern for practitioners was how their work could 'defeat or suspend its own objecthood'<sup>63</sup>, while for producers of three-dimensional works, the concern was with the 'espousal of objecthood' itself.<sup>64</sup> The mindset of artists such as Donald Judd and Robert Morris, who placed form in the service of materiality, resulting in inert, uniform works that were to be encountered in terms of their contextual placement, was characterised by Fried as a 'literalist attitude'.<sup>65</sup> The central claim of Fried's argument was that because of their obdurate physicality, literalist works failed to convince as art. They were, as he termed it, 'theatrical'<sup>66</sup>. Fried argued that because audience members had to share the gallery space with literalist works, which were realised on a similar scale to that of the viewer's body, the works were possessed with an unavoidable physical presence, yet this very condition meant that they could not convince as art. Like stage props that fail to convey a *mise-en-scène* because they too readily articulate their own materiality, Fried felt that literalist works appeared too corporeally real, and were thus received as empty illusion. Fried then contrasted this analysis of three-dimensional art with examples of high modernist sculpture. Following Greenberg's analysis of a new sculptural style, exemplified by Jules Olitski's *Bunga* (1967), (Fig. 8) that he claimed offered an 'illusion of modalities: namely, that matter is incorporeal, weightless, and exists only optically as a mirage',<sup>67</sup>

---

advance development of their own practices and the medium as a whole. Michael Fried, 'Three American Painters', in Fried, 1965.

<sup>63</sup> Michael Fried, 1967, p. 151.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>67</sup> Clement Greenberg, 'The New Sculpture', in Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 144.

Fried claimed that the work of Anthony Caro, such as *Prairie* (1967), suspended its objecthood by marrying 'illusion and structural obviousness'.<sup>68</sup> (Fig. 9) An impression of weightlessness in *Prairie* was achieved through painted surfaces which appeared to overcome the sculpture's physicality. By suspending its own objecthood, Caro's work sustained the viewer's imaginative projections, meaning that one's view of this artist's sculpture was 'eclipsed by the sculpture itself [which achieved] a continuous and entire *presentness*'.<sup>69</sup> Thus, fundamental to Fried's argument was the sense of finality that he attributed to experiences of high modernist art, and which minimalism, because of its commitment to objecthood, lacked. Diarmuid Costello offers the following summary of the differences that Fried identified between modernist and minimalist art forms:

Minimalism transformed the idea of a work from a discrete, internally complex entity on the wall or floor to that of a simple object *plus* its spectator *plus* the spatio-temporal location in which it was installed, hence from a one-term to a three-term relation or from a complex, internally rich work to a simple, internally empty object embedded in a complex installation.<sup>70</sup>

Fried argued that the audience member's bodily movements yielded a continually changing relation both to three-dimensional works and to the gallery spaces into which they spatially extended, such that these continually changing vistas returned the viewer to the temporal progression of the encounter itself. For these reasons Fried believed that three-dimensional works impoverished the modes of encounter offered by works such as Caro's or Olitski's because they went on and on indefinitely, without offering a point of culmination. 'It is inexhaustible [...] not because of any fullness – that is the inexhaustibility of art – but because there is nothing there to exhaust.'<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Michael Fried, 'Two Sculptures by Anthony Caro', in *Modern Sculpture Reader*, ed. by David Hulks, Alex Potts, and Jon Wood (Leeds: The Henry Moore Institute, 2007), p. 259.

<sup>69</sup> Fried, 1967, p. 167.

<sup>70</sup> Diarmuid Costello, 'On the Very Idea of a 'Specific' Medium: Michael Fried and Stanley Cavell on Painting and Photography as Arts', *Critical Inquiry*, 34:2 (Winter 2008) 2274-312, p. 281.

<sup>71</sup> Fried, 1967, p. 166.

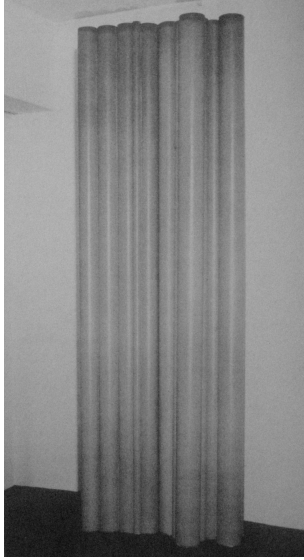


Fig. 8, Jules Olitski, *Bunga 45*, aluminium with acrylic paint, 1967.

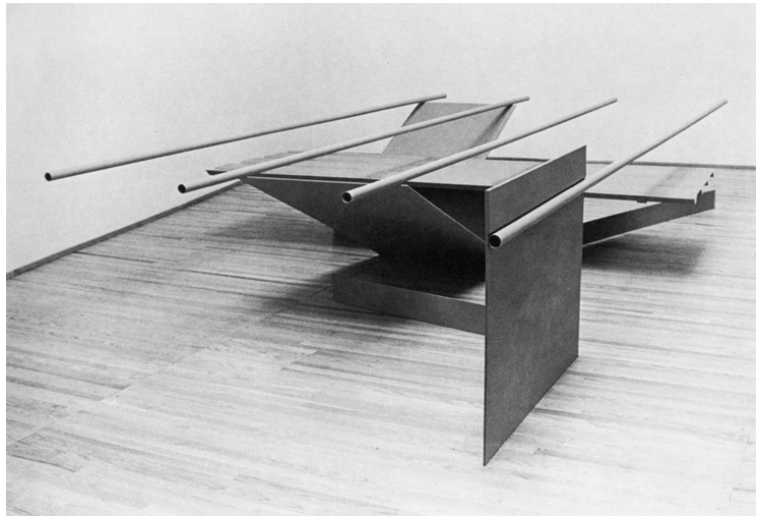


Fig. 9, Anthony Caro, *Prairie*, painted steel, 1967

## 5. An Emergent Critique of the Gallery Space

In 1967, the same year that Fried published 'Art and Objecthood', the artist Robert Smithson published two articles that examined the role played by the gallery space in framing encounters with art.<sup>72</sup> In 'Some Void Thoughts on Museums', and 'What is a Museum? A Dialogue Between Allan Kaprow and Robert Smithson', Smithson argued that gallery architecture served to draw a concrete line of division between contained spaces stripped of content in which art was encountered, and the environments beyond these walls where the alienated life praxis of capitalist society was conducted. 'Some Void Thoughts on Museums' (1967) (Fig. 10), vividly captured these sentiments by describing conditions of reception within America's art museums in terms of an effect of perceptual drainage upon museum visitors: 'The museum undermines one's confidence in sense data and erodes the impression of textures upon which our sensations exist.'<sup>73</sup> Smithson suggested that the cause of this undermining was the empty white space that surrounded displays: 'Visiting a museum is a matter of going from void to void.'<sup>74</sup> He

<sup>72</sup> Robert Smithson, 'Some Void Thoughts on Museums', *Arts Magazine*, 41:4 (February 1967); reprinted in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), p 41; Robert Smithson, 'What is a Museum? A Dialogue between Allan Kaprow and Robert Smithson', *Arts Yearbook*, 'The Museum World' (1967, re-printed in Flam, pp. 43-44.

<sup>73</sup> Robert Smithson, 'Some Void Thoughts on Museums', in Flam, 1996, p. 41.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid..



extended this commentary in an interview with Allan Kaprow:

It seems to me that there is an attitude that [...] would tend to see the museum as a null and void structure. But I think that the nullity implied in the museum is actually one of its major assets. [...] I'm interested for the most part in what's not happening, that area between events that could be called a gap. This gap exists in the blank or void regions or settings that we never look at. A museum devoted to different kinds of emptiness could be developed. The emptiness could be defined by the actual installation of art. Installations should empty rooms, not fill them.<sup>75</sup>

Smithson's comments introduce a different critical vocabulary—'what's not happening', 'gaps', 'blank regions'<sup>76</sup>—to describe the intervals left between works in gallery hangs, the surfaces of white space that underpin their presentation, the emptiness that he considers the gallery wall to signify. His analysis sought to cut through the mystique of the gallery space and deal instead with its material structures in relation to its functions. This holistic approach to the gallery was re-affirmed in his article 'Untitled (Air Terminal – Windows)' (1967), where Smithson considered that '[t]he exact installations of art shows makes one conscious of the actual walls rather than any portable windows smeared with gas-like colour'.<sup>77</sup> Thus the placement and arrangement of works can have the effect of re-emphasising the configuration of support structures upon which displays depend, finally returning the viewer back to the material organisation of the site and the configuration of its components. Smithson emphasises that these material constituents are subjected to different functions through the frames of linguistic interpretation. As he says, 'Language at this point has the same weight as material'.<sup>78</sup> Smithson's analysis here contrasts with the arguments advanced by Greenberg, where it is the formal configuration of the work and the way that it engages our visual sensibility that determines our prioritisation of it within the gallery. In contrast, Smithson believes that we prioritise the art work because of the manner in which the space is coded as a framework of display, through the nomination of particular aspects as objects of

<sup>75</sup> Robert Smithson, 'What is a Museum?' in Flam, 1996, pp. 43-44.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid..

<sup>77</sup> Robert Smithson, 'Untitled (Air Terminal – Windows)', in Flam, p. 355.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid..

contemplation and others as support structures. Once one can view the work as a component of such a framework (albeit the one prioritised above all others), the functions mapped throughout the site become open to question and re-ordering. In 'Towards the Development of an Air Terminal Site' (1967), Smithson emphasises how the term 'painting' was itself 'derived from the visual meaning of the word 'window', and then extended to mean wall.'<sup>79</sup>



Fig. 10, Robert Smithson, *Museum of the Void*, pencil on paper, 48 x 60 cm, 1969

The way that Greenberg privileges painting as the focal point within the gallery space, because of what he considers to be its distinctly optical character, is undermined by the primacy Smithson gives to the terms of interpretation that establish hierarchies between display components, which, he also emphasises, possess a shared genesis in the language of architecture. These observations question the Greenbergian perception of painting as a distinct field of practice that is unconnected to architecture, and emphasise instead the fact that Greenberg's theory rests upon normative and hierarchical categorisations of components within the gallery space. Smithson's analysis leads to a plea for the freeing of material components from such constraining categorisations: 'We must see only surfaces and lines.'<sup>80</sup> Here, the functions and configurations that pre-determine focal points and support structures within the gallery become open to re-negotiation:

<sup>79</sup> Robert Smithson, 'Towards the Development of an Air Terminal Site', *Artforum*, 5:10 (June 1967), reprinted in Flam, p. 60.

<sup>80</sup> Smithson, 'Untitled (Air Terminal – Windows)', in Flam, p. 355.

Any actual window is much better to look at [than a painting] – mainly because most of them are simply grid systems that hold surfaces of transparent glass. So that even a window isn't really a window. A wall is in effect an opaque window. Thinking about windows evokes an infinite array of window meanings. The framework of a painting becomes a window without glass.<sup>81</sup>

Thus, the primary value that high modernist criticism placed on art's transcendence of its objecthood came under sustained attack from the materialist critique made through the practice and writings of Robert Morris and Donald Judd, as well as from Smithson's theorisation of an apparatus of display that included the art object and was grounded in a set of socially constructed meanings. This resulted in a change in the parameters of debate; a shift that was confirmed with the 1967 publication of 'Art and Objecthood', Michael Fried's defence of modernist art.

## **6. The Protest Movement and its Impact on Art Practice**

The critique of the gallery space mounted by Smithson, and the critique of high modernism posed by minimalist installation created a frame through which to view these sites as social institutions, and to read encounters with artworks within these spaces as contextually determined in relation to the material site of the gallery space. In the hands of artists such as Michael Asher this critique accelerated into a full-blown questioning of the function of the gallery space. The critical focus of an emergent generation of conceptually focused practitioners was shaped in the context of rapidly developing political events occurring outside the field of art. A protest movement that questioned the extent to which the ideals of American politics informed the practice of American politics. In 1965, during Lyndon B. Johnson's inauguration as the 36th president of the United States, he drew attention to a founding vision of America as a 'place where a man could be his own'.<sup>82</sup> Amidst a developing Cold War with the

---

<sup>81</sup>Ibid..

<sup>82</sup><http://www.lbjlibrary.net/collections/selected-speeches/1965/01-20-1965.html/>> [accessed 29 August 2012].

communist world and an on-going war in Vietnam, Johnson emphasised the need to uphold American liberal ideals and to maintain a society that functioned to protect the freedom of the individuals who formed it. It was felt by many that the injustices wrought in Vietnam seemed to contradict these ideals, causing a widespread loss of faith in government. One student said, 'The war became personalised through an extrapolation of the senseless death, steel and bullets. L.B.J. could rain death down on innocent millions. The enormity of this crime was terrible [...] I felt total dissatisfaction with America, and I could think of no other solution except resistance.'<sup>83</sup> Protesters often emphasised a feeling of exclusion from American political life that led them to question how emphasis upon the need to defend American values of 'justice, liberty, and union'<sup>84</sup> masked dominant interests within society. Indeed, in 1962, the editors of the journal *Studies on the New Left* claimed that 'twentieth century liberalism, insofar as it is not merely rhetorical, is a system of political ideas consciously developed to strengthen the systems of large-scale corporate capitalism.'<sup>85</sup> During this period, such sentiments manifested themselves as collective opposition to the policies of governments and social institutions, and came to be described as the New Left.<sup>86</sup> At an anti-war protest in Washington DC in 1965, Carl Oglesby, a prominent member of the organisation, Students for a Democratic Society, declared,

We are here to protest against a growing war. Since it is a very bad war, we acquire the habit of thinking that it must be caused by very bad men. But we only conceal reality, I think, to denounce on such grounds the menacing coalition of industrial and military power, or the brutality of the blitzkrieg we are waging against Vietnam [...] We must imply observe, and quite plainly say, that this coalition, this blitzkrieg, and this demand for acquiescence are creatures, all of them, of a government that since 1932 has considered itself to be

<sup>83</sup> Unnamed student, quoted in Michael Useem, 'Ideological and Interpersonal Change in the Radical Protest Movement', *Social Problems*, 19:4 (Spring, 1972), 451-469

<sup>84</sup> <<http://www.lbjlibrary.net/collections/selected-speeches/1965/01-20-1965.html/>> [accessed 29 August 2012].

<sup>85</sup> Martin Sklar, 'Woodrow Wilson and the Political Economy of Modern United States Liberalism', *Studies on the New Left Three* (1962), cited in Kevin Mattson, 'Between Despair and Hope: Revisiting Studies on the New Left', in McMillian and Buhle, 2003, p. 5.

<sup>86</sup> McMillian defines the New Left as 'a loosely organised, mostly white student movement that promoted participatory democracy, crusaded for civil rights and various types of university reforms, and protested against the Vietnam war.' John McMillan, 'You Didn't have to be There', in McMillian and Buhle, 2003, p. 5.

fundamentally *liberal*.<sup>87</sup>

Oglesby's contemporary, Howard Zinn, emphasised the structure that such oppositional stances often took; for instance, the ways in which the occupation of institutional spaces, such as the sit-in at Columbia University in 1968, temporarily stripped these sites of the forms of authority that otherwise mediated them. Zinn viewed such protests as an effort to 'create constellations of power outside of the state, to pressure it into human actions, to resist its inhuman actions and to replace it in the carrying on of voluntary activities by people who want to maintain, in small groups, both individuality and co-operation'.<sup>88</sup>

The connections that Zinn made between specific institutions and the broader forms of governance was characteristic of a number of intellectual re-assessments of the social distribution of authority at this time. However, whilst Zinn emphasised the power of individuals united in co-operative action, the French Marxist intellectual Louis Althusser argued that such a humanist standpoint was itself a product of ideology.<sup>89</sup> In his 1970 essay, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', Althusser argued that ideology worked alongside repressive force to maintain the status-quo within societies. Writing in the aftermath of Paris riots of May 1968 (Fig. 11), Althusser re-examined the conditions under which existing relations of production were re-produced within society by re-assessing the classical Marxist conception of the state as a politico-legal construct created to validate and protect the unequal distribution of productive means within society by creating and imposing laws. Thus, Althusser's commentary analyses the institutional frameworks through which the life-praxis in relation to which Bürger orients his argument are structured.

---

<sup>87</sup> Carl Oglesby, speech on November 27, 1965, published in Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau, eds., *The New Radicals A Report with Documents* (London: Random House, 1966), p. 258.

<sup>88</sup> Howard Zinn, 'Marxism and the New Left', in Alfred L. Young, ed., *Dissent: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1968), pp. 365-366.

<sup>89</sup> See also, Louis Althusser, 'Marxism and Humanism, in Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 219-248.



Fig. 11, Bruno Barbey, Paris. 6th arrondissement. Boulevard Saint Germain, May 6th 1968, students hurling projectiles against the police, photograph, 1968.

In his early writings on the state, Marx claimed that social inequality originates in the separation of political emancipation—the founding of affairs of state in matters of general concern to all citizens—from human emancipation, which is specific to each individual's circumstances and interests. By abstracting itself from relations of power as they are expressed within society in this way, the state pre-supposes these relations in its operations. Marx emphasised, for example, how the abolition of property qualification from the American voting system did 'not abolish private property'; it actually presupposes its existence.<sup>90</sup> He claims,

The state abolishes, after a fashion, the distinctions established by *birth, social rank, education, occupation*, when it decrees that birth, social rank, education, occupation, are *non-political* distinctions, that every member of society is an *equal* partner in the popular sovereignty [...] Far from abolishing these *effective* differences, it only exists so far as they are presupposed.<sup>91</sup>

Such pre-suppositions are exemplified in the question of liberty to which Johnson referred in his 1965 acceptance to office speech. Marx summarised liberty as it is enshrined in the constitutions of the United States of America and the French Republic as 'the right to do and perform anything that does not harm others. [...] Liberty as a right

<sup>90</sup> Karl Marx, 'On The Jewish Question', in Simon, 1994, p. 10.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 8.



of man is not based on the association of man with man but rather on the separation of man from man.<sup>92</sup> Here, the double function of individuation and integration performed by museums like the Louvre becomes explicit. The modern state rests on the separation of political emancipation from human emancipation; it pre-supposes the unequal relations of production within society; yet it also polices these relations in the name of maintaining order. Marx concludes that, 'Far from viewing man here in his species-being, his species-life itself – society – rather appears to be an external framework for the individual'.<sup>93</sup> He considers the state, by legislating over social relations, to be one of the primary constituents of the superstructure, which, alongside such social institutions as the family and church, mediates 'mental production as expressed in the language of politics, law, morality, religion, metaphysics'<sup>94</sup>, and which, alongside the two levels of the economic base—means of production and relations of production—constitute the social whole.

The architectural metaphor through which Marx's thesis is conveyed (the erection of the superstructure upon the economic base) was Althusser's point of departure. He responded to the question of how the relations of production within the economic base are reproduced as follows: '[E]very social formation must reproduce the conditions of its production at the same time as it produces, and in order to be able to produce. It must therefore reproduce: 1. the productive forces, 2. the existing relations of production.'<sup>95</sup> In order to explain this process of reproduction, Althusser explores the role that institutions of ideology play in support of the state. To do this, Althusser identifies what he describes as (repressive) state apparatuses: 'the government, the administration, the army, the police, the courts, the prisons, etc.'<sup>96</sup>. Repressive apparatuses 'ultimately function by violence', he says, (the role of the police in this respect was exemplified during the riots that raged throughout Chicago during the Democratic Convention from the 22<sup>nd</sup>—25<sup>th</sup> August 1968), but they are also supported by a series of distinct and specialised institutions that function 'by ideology', such as the

---

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>94</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978), p. 47.

<sup>95</sup> Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in Louis Althusser, *On Ideology* (London: Verso, 2008), p. 2.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

family, the trade-unions, the press, and the arts.<sup>97</sup> Ideology, Althusser claims, is materialised in the operations of these state apparatuses. The organisation and function of a school or a church, for instance, is the articulation of an ideological programme that integrates individuals into a series of ritual practices. The role that Althusser attributes to such institutions adds a further layer to Marx's own analysis of ideology. 'If in ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical process.'<sup>98</sup> For Marx, the cause of such a distortion lies in the contradictions inherent within the social formations that people experience in practice. Althusser emphasises the social reproduction of ideology through the integration of individuals with ideological state apparatuses: 'Ideology is a "representation" of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.'<sup>99</sup> Althusser advances this argument through two related theses. The first, ('Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence'<sup>100</sup>), formulates ideology as both illusion and allusion, yet it is the '*imaginary nature of this relation* which underlies all the imaginary distortion that we observe'.<sup>101</sup> Through the second thesis, ('Ideology has a material existence'<sup>102</sup>), Althusser identifies the production of an individual's beliefs with the practices towards which that individual's thoughts are directed. Thus he claims that regarding any given individual, 'the existence of the ideas of his belief is material in that *his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves governed by material ideological apparatuses from which derive the ideas of that subject*'.<sup>103</sup> Thus the notion that the ideas that populate an individual's consciousness are formulated by that individual disappears from Althusser's analysis, and, instead, ideas are subordinated to material practices—the person's interaction with ideological apparatuses.

According to Althusser's argument, it is the norms of practice within a given

---

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp. 17-19.

<sup>98</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 1978, p. 47.

<sup>99</sup> Althusser, p. 36.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid..

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., pp. 36-38.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

apparatus that 'represent' the relation of individuals to their real conditions of existence; and it is patterns of interaction with this apparatus that not only reproduce the ideological function of the apparatus—be it a school, a church, or a museum or art gallery—but also validate the relations of production in the economic base. Thus, in practical terms, an art institution such as a museum or a private gallery cannot merely be conceived of in terms of the building, the people who work within it, and the activities of the institution that are expressed by their work; rather, it must be conceived of as the ways in which the workers and the audience members alike are integrated into the project of the institution, and how this project is reproduced through the practices/rituals that occur within the institution's walls, or, indeed, that are connected with it outside. Such norms of practice are reproduced by the transition of the expectations of the people engaged with the institution (at all levels) into forms of behaviour, and by the reproduction of these expectations in the resulting inter-personal interactions. Thus, institutions exist as a set of interlinked practices, identified with an organisational framework and enacted by different people through a set of pre-established roles in ways that intersect with and re-affirm existing norms.

Reactions to the Vietnam war within America's artistic community led to the formation of groups such as the Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG) (Fig. 12) and the Art Workers' Coalition. Whilst these groups protested directly against the war, they also focused attention onto the institutional function of America's art museums. Artists, critics and activists engaged with these groups criticised institutions like the Museum of Modern Art, New York, both in terms of the public service that they offered and their contribution to the ideological superstructure of American society. The ways in which these groups sought to reform museums also offers further qualification to the museums' structure as institutions. An open hearing of the Art Workers' Coalition, which took place in the school of Visual Arts in New York on the 10th April, 1969, addressed the issue of museum reform and featured statements presented by both artists and critics. Hans Haacke called for 'decentralisation, a dispersal of museum activities into all areas of the city'<sup>104</sup>, and John Perrault called for free admission one day a week.<sup>105</sup> Iris Crump

<sup>104</sup> Hans Haacke, 'Statement Read at the First Open Hearing of the Art Workers' Coalition', New York School of Visual Arts Auditorium, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1969, printed in the record of the hearing at <http://primaryinformation.org/files/FOH.pdf> [accessed: 10 August 2013], pp. 51-52.

<sup>105</sup> John Perrault, 'Statement Read at the First Open Hearing of the Art Workers' Coalition', New York School of Visual Arts Auditorium, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1969, printed in the record of the hearing at

considered issues of representation and called for 'the establishment of a Black and Puerto-Rican wing' in the Museum of Modern Art.<sup>106</sup> More radically, in the context of Althusser's theory, these proposed reformulations adjust the ideological function of the museum by widening the audience to include broader classes and ethnicities. Jean Toche of GAAG extended these demands to the class interests that mediated the activities of the museum. There had to be 'effective participation in the running of these institutions in the same manner as, today, students are fighting for the control of schools and universities.'<sup>107</sup> Toche believed that the organisational structures of America's art museums should be democratised, with greater involvement from artists and members of the public, so as to lift control from the hands of committees of trustees. The protests staged by these groups pressured museum boardrooms to consider which classes and ethnicities found representation within art museums, and to renegotiate how museums connected with other social, political and economic apparatuses.



Fig. 12, Protest at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, May 2, 1970, by the Guerilla Art Action Group (GAAG), the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC), the Black & Puerto Rican Emergency Cultural Coalition.

The impact of these protests upon America's art establishment was reflected in the July 1971 issue of the art magazine *Art in America*, titled *Museums in Crisis*, that

<<http://primaryinformation.org/files/FOH.pdf/>> [accessed: 10 August 2013], p. 125.

<sup>106</sup> Iris Crump, 'Statement Read at the First Open Hearing of the Art Workers' Coalition,' New York School of Visual Arts Auditorium, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1969, printed in the record of the hearing <<http://primaryinformation.org/files/FOH.pdf/>> [accessed: 10 August 2013], p. 79.

<sup>107</sup> Jean Toche, 'Statement Read at the First Open Hearing of the Art Workers' Coalition', New York School of Visual Arts Auditorium, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1969, printed in the record of the hearing <<http://primaryinformation.org/files/FOH.pdf/>> [accessed: 10 August 2013], p. 6.

was edited by Brian O'Doherty. Essays by curators, directors, and critics argued that art museums, as they had developed in the post-war period, had fallen out of step with a rapidly changing contemporary situation. O'Doherty summarised the situation:

Museums, once permanent fixtures by which we negotiate our spiritual journeys, have suddenly revealed infirmities in their foundations that have threatened them with collapse. Like many institutions of the late 1960s, they were abruptly thrust from their historical context into the vicissitudes of contemporary life, where the problems of an entire society [...] were brought to bear upon them.<sup>108</sup>

O'Doherty's comments convey the problems art museums faced once their performance as public institutions was contested. Elsewhere, criticisms were also levelled at the influence wealthy patrons and corporate sponsors wielded within the boardroom, connecting museums with wider political and business interests. This point was forcibly articulated by Gregory Battcock:

The trustees of museums [...] own AT&T, Ford, General Motors, the great billion dollar foundations, Columbia University, Aloc, Minnesota Mining, United Fruit and AMK. The implications of these facts are enormous. Do you realise that it is those art-loving, culturally committed trustees of the Metropolitan and Modern museums who are waging war in Vietnam?<sup>109</sup>

Governor Rockefeller, a trustee of the Museum of Modern Art, became the subject of artist Hans Haacke's installation in the 1970 exhibition, 'Information'.<sup>110</sup> The work, *MoMA Poll* (1970), (Fig. 13) consisted of ballot papers, marked 'yes' and 'no', positioned beneath a sign that read 'Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November?' The ballot papers were to be cast by audience members into plexiglass boxes. Governor Rockefeller was, at the time, a member of the board of trustees at the

<sup>108</sup> Brian O'Doherty, *Museums in Crisis* (New York: George Braziller and Art in America, 1972), p. 2.

<sup>109</sup> Gregory Battcock, quoted in Julie H. Reiss, *From Margin to Centre: The Spaces of Installation Art* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1999), p. 76.

<sup>110</sup> The exhibition 'Information', curated by Kynaston McShine, was on display between 2<sup>nd</sup> July—20<sup>th</sup> September, 1970, at Museum of Modern Art, New York.

museum. The work raised awareness of the museum's political affiliations, and offered the audience an opportunity to comment upon these, emphasising also that, as Anne Rorimer notes, the museum was 'not an ivory tower but tainted, like any social institution dependent upon funding, and not free of the biases of politics.'

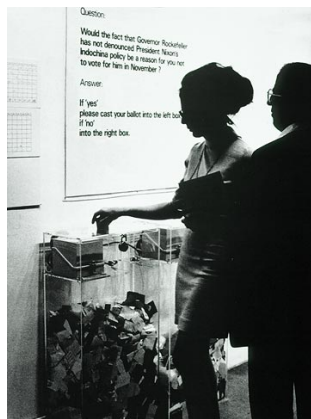


Fig. 13, Hans Haacke, *MoMA Poll*, part of the exhibition 'Information', Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1970.

## 7. Michael Asher's 'Spaces' and Pomona College Installations.

What I have described above is the social backdrop against which installations such as Asher's entered America's major art museums in the late 1960s, included in exhibitions such as 'Spaces' (1969) and 'Information' (1970) (the exhibition in which *MoMA Poll* was shown), both of which were held at the Museum of Modern Art New York; 'Anti-illusion: Procedures/Materials' at the Whitney Museum (1969) (Fig. 14); and 'Using Walls' at the Jewish Museum (1970). The works in these exhibitions declared their materiality, established relationships with the physical structures of the gallery spaces that housed them, and offered critical commentaries on how the galleries functioned. Considering these exhibitions together, it is possible to discern a new openness on the part of curators and museum boards towards a changing field of art practice—one which now took the social construction of artistic display and viewer-ship as its field of operation.

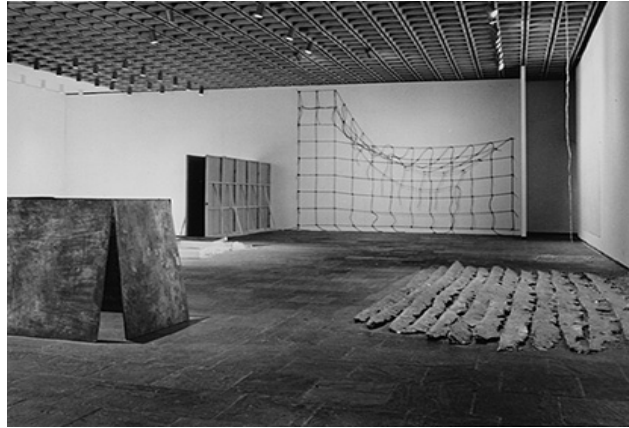


Fig. 14, *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 19<sup>th</sup> May to 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1969

'Spaces' focused upon the emergence of modes of environmental installation that advanced the minimalist critique of high modernist art, and the finality attributed to encounters of it by Greenberg and Fried, by drawing the attention of visitors towards the architectural structure of the gallery space. Jennifer Licht, the exhibition's curator, focused upon the interactive quality of the works, declaring that 'Spaces' aimed to exhibit 'artists concerned [with] altering or discarding the traditional dichotomy of viewer and static object for an environmental situation, which envelops and enmeshes the viewer in a fuller involvement with actual space.'<sup>111</sup> For the duration of the exhibition, five artists and a collaborative group, Pulsa, utilised MoMA's ground floor galleries and garden to produce immersive environmental works. In this section, I will consider the contributions of Dan Flavin and Larry Bell, artists whose work can be broadly aligned with the minimalist installations of Morris and Judd, before considering Asher's contribution to 'Spaces'. From this analysis, I hope to draw out the qualities that differentiated Asher's work from these artists around three parameters: an examination of the function of modern art galleries, a critique of conventions of modernist art practice and theory manifested through the works' dismantling of those conventions; and a critique of the pre-established roles into which galleries project visitors. As the form that combined these three components—gallery, work and audience—the convention of the modern art exhibition became the object of Asher's critical interventions.

<sup>111</sup> Jennifer Licht, quoted in Reiss, 1999, p. 93.



Dan Flavin's work, *Untitled Sonja* (1969) (Fig. 15), comprised two rows of fluorescent tubes that ran along the walls of the gallery in a repeated formation. The row on the east-facing wall emitted green light and was twice the height of the row on the west, which emitted yellow light. The white walls of the gallery reflected the light, filling the space with gradations of colour that were conditioned by the position of the tubes. The installation dramatised and put on display both the material phenomenon of the lights and the material enclosure of the gallery space. In his essay on Flavin's 1969 National Gallery of Canada exhibition, Donald Judd makes a similar analysis: 'Three main aspects of Flavin's work are the fluorescent tubes as the source of light, the light diffused throughout the surrounding space or cast upon nearby surfaces, and the arrangement together or placement upon surfaces of the fixtures and tubes.'<sup>112</sup> Yet Judd maintains that the lights themselves are the work's primary component. He continues, 'I think Flavin wants, at least first or primarily, a particular phenomenon. The even, confined glow of the tubes, [...] is standard and not much changed by the different colours'.<sup>113</sup> In a 1964 interview with Bruce Glaser that also featured Judd and the painter Frank Stella, Flavin described his use of fluorescent lights in similar terms to Judd's comments of 1969: 'I think [of my work as] an arrangement of sticks, of colour sticks that are luminous, if that. The thing is more and more an object for me.'<sup>114</sup> A hierarchy between work and site is implicit in both comments. Yet the predominance of coloured light in the installation led some commentators to consider the work in terms of a dissolution of architectural limits, reintroducing the drivers of Fried's argument—illusion and the transcendence of material structure—in the context of environmental installation. One review in *The New York Times* considered that Flavin's work offered 'the illusion of spatial boundaries obliterated by colour and light'.<sup>115</sup>

---

<sup>112</sup> Donald Judd, 'fluorescent lights, etc.', in *Dan Flavin* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1969). Reprinted in Paula Feldman and Karsten Schubert, *It is what it is: writings on Dan Flavin since 1964* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), p. 56.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>114</sup> Bruce Glaser, 'New Nihilism or New Art? Interview with Judd, Stella and Flavin', originally broadcast on WBAI-FM, New York, February 1964. Reprinted in James Meyer, *Minimalism: Themes and Movements* (London: Phaidon, 2000), p. 198.

<sup>115</sup> Grace Glueck, 'Museum Beckoning Space Explorers,' *New York Times*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1970.



Fig. 15, Dan Flavin, *Untitled Sonja*, within 'Spaces', Museum of Modern Art New York, fluorescent lights, 1969

These qualities were also explored in Californian artist Larry Bell's use of darkened space and reflected light. Bell worked in a long, narrow space that was bisected by a wall running down the room's centre (Fig. 16). On the end wall the artist installed two sheets of vacuum coated glass that intermittently reflected light produced by an external light source. The installation explored perceptual experience in environments where spatial limits had become uncertain, bringing emphasis to the importance of visual information in spatial navigation.<sup>116</sup> Bell's 'Spaces' installation minimised visual stimulus, raising the importance of tactility for people encountering it. Dore Ashton described how in the darkness she 'found only a long wall along which I groped my way to the end and back.'<sup>117</sup> Through imposed sensory deprivation, Bell's installation achieved a similar effect experienced by *The New York Times*' reviewer of Flavin's undifferentiated coloured space. Bell's examinations of light and reflectivity attempted to fragment and dissolve the viewers' awareness of the work's material supports; his work can therefore be seen to be linked to those works with the luminous fields of colour detached from material structure that Fried saw as the very condition of

<sup>116</sup> Visitors to Bell's 'Spaces' installation may have identified in this work characteristics of the tinted or embellished glass cubes supported by glass or clear plastic plinths from exhibitions such as that at the Pace Gallery in 1965 expanded onto an architectural scale. In his article on Bell in that year, John Coplans described how Bell's cubes seemed to contrast knowledge of material fact with visual appearance: 'Bell transforms a complex geometry of hard, intractable and brittle glass [...] into an intimate, luminous, and fragile object'. (John Coplans, 'Larry Bell', *Artforum* 43:9 (June 1965), 27-29, p. 27.) Coplans also thought that the reflective qualities of the material from which the cubes were made set 'in motion a series of endlessly multiplying and constantly shifting images of the observer and the observed'. (Ibid., p. 29.)

<sup>117</sup> Dore Ashton, 'New York Commentary', *Studio International* (March 1970), p. 118.

autonomy.<sup>118</sup> Flavin's installation was certainly open to such readings, while Bell's work oscillated between objecthood and artwork, in Fried's sense of these terms, being a controlled environment that confronted visitors with an experience (or absence) of light that was grounded in illusion, thus obfuscating the apparatus of display itself.

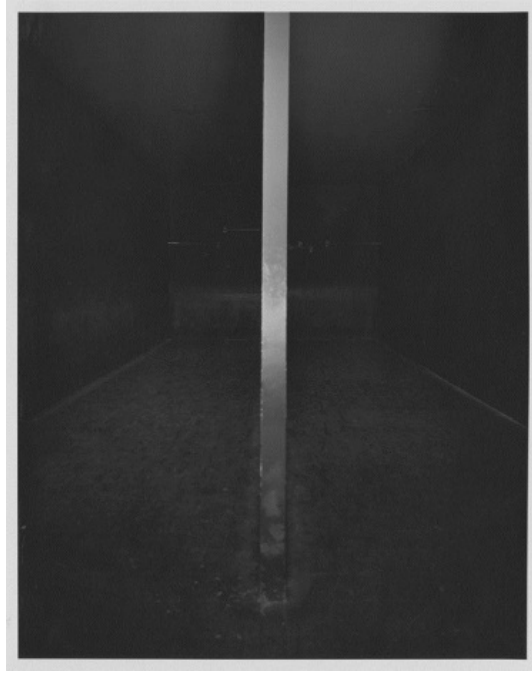


Fig. 16, Larry Bell's installation within 'Spaces', Museum of Modern Art, New York, vacuum coated glass and light, 1969

These observations are significant to the critical reception of Asher's installation, which was introduced on the information sheet that accompanied the exhibition in terms of a radical reduction of audio-visual stimuli: 'Asher has created perhaps the only quiet spot in New York - a space of perfect tranquillity in which echoes and reverberations are

<sup>118</sup> Another Californian artist, James Turrell, had concurrently worked towards perfecting similar environmental situations. In 1969, Turrell and fellow artist Robert Irwin collaborated with experimental psychologist Dr Edward Wortz at Garrett Aerospace Corporation, where they explored the production of environments that minimised variance in sensory stimuli. Their aim was to produce artworks that would allow members of the public to experience a homogeneous visual field, or *ganzfeld*. A *ganzfeld* is an environment that is devoid of temporal and spatial information, as it is featureless, and light is uniformly distributed throughout. After working with Irwin and Wortz, Turrell produced a number of environments and apertures such as *Laar* (1976) that sought to produce *ganzfelds* within museum environments. Turrell's aim in these works was to diffuse any sense of architectural solidity, and render the space as an undifferentiated field of light. Referring to these works, Turrell notes 'I don't care about "perfect" walls, surfaces, and edges, I just don't want them to be noticed'. James Turrell interviewed by Pamela Hammond in *James Turrell: Four Light Installations*, ed. Laura J. Millin (Seattle: Centre on Contemporary Art, 1982), p 19. In a similar fashion, Bell's darkened interior tended towards an undifferentiated field that was intermittently broken by reflections from the glass panels.

eliminated.<sup>119</sup> But whilst Asher's installation, like Flavin's and Bell's, also emphasised architectural structure and environmental phenomena, in this case these were utilised to critically examine the function of the gallery space. The result was a critique of art as an institution that was formulated, through analysis of the ideological function of the gallery space.

His work was produced in a twenty-three-and-a-half feet wide and twenty-and-a-half feet long gallery that featured an exit each in its south-west- and north-east-facing corners. These entrances opened onto corridors that ran behind the south and east-facing walls, offering access to other installations in the exhibition. (Fig. 17) Asher constructed a ceiling that lowered the height of the room to eight feet, added two additional layers of wall filled with acoustic insulation, and covered the both ceiling and floor with acoustic panelling. The walls and ceiling were then painted white, creating a uniform finish throughout the environment. As the installation had no internal light source, and the walls, floor and ceiling muffled the sound generated inside, the majority of the visual and auditory stimuli within the space originated from outside. Thus, the further away audience members were from the installation's entrances/exits, the more light and sound were reduced.

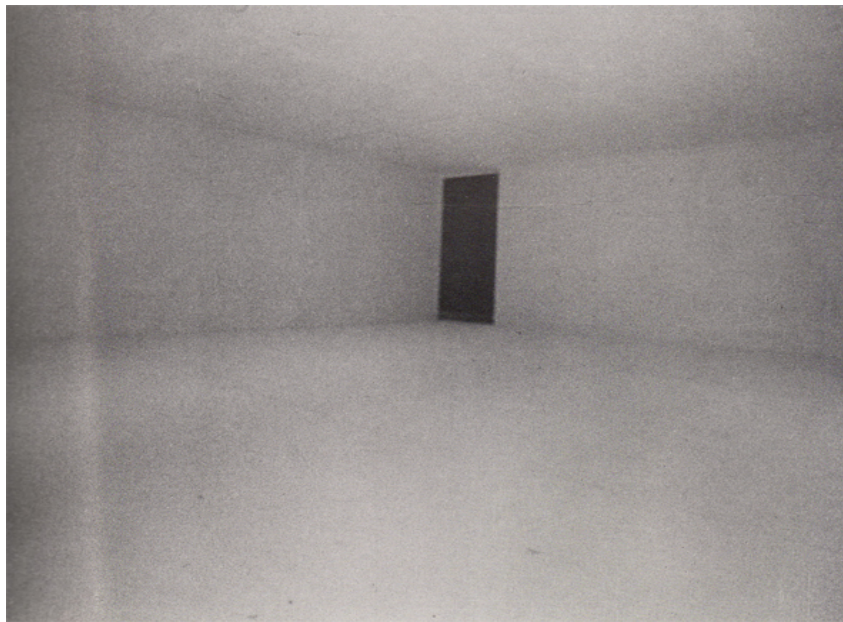


Fig. 17, Michael Asher, installation within the exhibition 'Spaces', Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1969

<sup>119</sup> Museum of Modern Art New York, 'Entrance Information on SPACES exhibition', <[http://www.moma.org/docs/press\\_archives/4395/releases/MOMA\\_1969\\_July-December\\_0088\\_162.pdf](http://www.moma.org/docs/press_archives/4395/releases/MOMA_1969_July-December_0088_162.pdf)> [accessed 14 September 2012].

Asher's manipulation of the architectural frame of the gallery yielded an installation that immersed visitors within a uniform architectural environment without guiding their attention to any particular point in that environment. The artist notes, 'As a rectangular container with all of its surfaces treated in the same way, the work created a continuity with no singular point of perceptual objectification, unlike phenomenologically determined works which attempted to fabricate a highly controlled area of visual perception. The various constituent functions of the space were made accessible to the viewer's experience.'<sup>120</sup> Asher's comments here emphasise the distance his own work from practitioners such as Flavin, Judd or Morris; whilst Asher's installation engaged viewers with the cuboid structure on an architectural scale, it avoided guiding the viewer's attention to any particular display object. This emphasis on structure also distanced Asher from the undifferentiated continuity of Bell's darkened environment. Instead, Asher's installation foregrounded the unified and continuous white architectural containers (white cubes) that form conventional backdrops for the exhibition of works of modern art.

Despite these differences, Dore Ashton conflated Asher's and Bell's environments in her review of the 'Spaces' exhibition because of the paucity of sensory stimuli they both offered. She drew an analogy between viewers' experiences within both pieces to those of 'explorers stranded in Antarctica, or at sea.'<sup>121</sup> Whilst Ashton found that Asher's environment suggested a boundless expanse, others felt that the Spartan interior could sensitise visitors to spatial structure and gradations of light and sound in ways that were akin to the installations of Robert Morris. Carter Ratcliff commented, 'One is reminded that we rely on senses other than sight for part of our intuition of spatial volume.'<sup>122</sup> 'Spaces' curator Jenifer Licht's own analysis concurred with Ratcliff's observations. Like Asher himself, she also considered how the installation drew attention to the function performed by the galleries in MoMA: 'One's expectation is for something to look at, but Asher reduces visual evidence to such a degree that the room can be characterised as a void; and he calls on senses that are less accustomed than sight to space.'<sup>123</sup> Licht's reference to *expectations* calls attention to the

<sup>120</sup> Asher in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, ed., *Michael Asher, Writings 1973-1983 on Works 1969-1979* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), p. 30.

<sup>121</sup> Dore Ashton, 1970, p. 19.

<sup>122</sup> Carter Ratcliff, 'New York Letter', *Art International*, 14:2 (February 1970), p. 78.

<sup>123</sup> Jennifer Licht, *Spaces, exhibition catalogue* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1969), n.p.

preconceptions that visitors, especially frequent exhibition goers, might hold; that MoMA's ground floor galleries were spaces in which they would predominantly exercise their visual capabilities—an idea that Asher's installation confounded. Asher's temporary manipulation of one of these galleries served as a critical commentary upon how its design particularly facilitated the viewing of painting and sculpture. The way in which his work integrated light and sound from outside and yet dampened sound made within the space was a key factor. Asher himself noted that '[t]he work was isolated from the museum, yet functioned simultaneously by integrating sound and light from within the museum.'<sup>124</sup> This sense of isolation was achieved through a gradual tailing off of light and sound as one moved towards the interior extremities of Asher's installation. The other galleries within MoMA were not immune from effects of isolation, but the significance of Asher's work was in the way he highlighted and prioritised this; he made his space work in opposition to those other gallery spaces, the continuous white walls and interior lighting systems of which were designed to *exclude* awareness of activities outside and produce environments that could function independently of their surroundings. Asher responded to MoMA's gallery—designed by Goodwin to support Barr's programmatic displays of modernist painting and sculpture—by further intensifying the conditions of reception it created, critically emphasising the support that it provided for instantaneous encounters with modernist art as theorised by Fried and Greenberg.

The artifice of the gallery space as a support for artistic reception, a sphere of experience bounded by the gallery walls from the broader praxis of life and structured through a play of enclosure, separation and transition, received further examination three months later in Asher's intervention within the Gladys K. Montgomery Art Centre at Pomona College in Claremont, California. Pomona College Art Gallery was situated on College Avenue. Visitors entered the building from the street through double doors set in a portico that led into a lobby. The lobby then led into a forty-one foot long and twenty-six foot wide gallery space. The lobby and portico served as a transitional buffer between the street and the gallery space, which was closed off from its urban surroundings. For his piece, Asher removed the double doors through which visitors entered the Art Centre, and refashioned the interior architecture to transform the Art

---

<sup>124</sup> Asher in Buchloh, 1983, p.30.

Centre into a single transitional space (Fig. 18). Asher introduced three new walls within the gallery. One diagonally bisected the rear gallery, and a second ran parallel to it in the lobby area, whilst the third wall closed off the space opposite the diagonal wall in the lobby to create a triangular space. The intervention transformed the rectilinear lobby and main exhibition area into two opposing isosceles triangles joined by a twenty four inch wide corridor (Fig. 19). All furniture was removed from the lobby and the walls, floor and ceiling were painted to create identical smooth, clean, white surfaces. For the duration of the exhibition the interior gallery remained open to the street outside, and was open to the public at all times. The triangular space funnelled each visitor directly towards the far corner of the rear gallery, drawing the attention of regular visitors to the changed dimensions of the space and heightening the awareness of all visitors to their proximity to the galleries architecture. Natural light and air streamed through the newly open entrance, ensuring that the environmental conditions inside remained consistent with those outside.

These alterations served to question the function of the Art Centre's various architectural components. College Avenue and the Art Centre were brought into a more obvious conjunction, and, as visitors moved from one to the other, their responses to the space they were entering were conditioned by that which they were leaving. The absence of exhibits and the minimum of visual incident within Asher's altered interior invited visitors to focus upon the spatial dynamics and the play of light within the space itself. This was in contrast to the way the same visitors might previously have assumed the gallery to function—as a mere backdrop to the displays within. The installation contrasted current experience with the site's former function in three ways. Firstly, visitors were intended to experience a transitional movement from outside to inside, rather than a segregation of an external multi-purpose space and an internal gallery environment. Secondly, uninterrupted by paintings or sculptures, the material structure and spatial configuration of the building's internal architecture became the likely focus of the viewer's attention. Thirdly, as visitors moved back towards the street, the exit framed the space outside, meaning that from inside the gallery, immersed within the aestheticising function of the white gallery walls, the departing visitor could potentially view the exterior street scene, seen through this rectilinear aperture, as, itself, an object of display (Fig. 20).





Fig. 18, Michael Asher, *No Title*, installed at Pomona College Art Gallery, USA, 1970

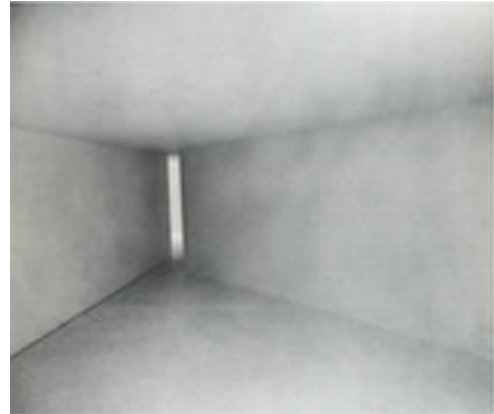


Fig. 19, Michael Asher, *No Title*, installed at Pomona College Art Gallery, USA, 1970



Fig. 20, Michael Asher, *No Title*, installed at Pomona College Art Gallery, USA, 1970.

## 8. The Relation Between the Installation and Site

Asher's focus upon the conversion of work and site emerged through his engagement with the minimalist visual languages. This initially resulted in the production of a number of tapered wedge pieces, that were designed to respond to gallery architecture and were painted the same colour as, the gallery wall, in a similar manner to the corner pieces and box forms that populated Morris's installations.<sup>125</sup> Asher's pre-1969 work,

<sup>125</sup> Buchloh discusses these early works in his essay 'Michael Asher and the Conclusion of Modern Sculpture', in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, ed., *Neo-Avant-Garde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1980), pp. 1-39.

then, can be read as part of the minimalist critique of high modernist practice, in that his installations were engaged with the debates surrounding art and objecthood that preoccupied Fried, Judd and Morris in the late 1960s. Asher's installations in the 1969 MoMA show and the 1970 Pomona show, though, unlike the earlier pieces, were not produced through juxtaposing pre-fabricated units with the architectural structure of the gallery space; instead, they involved intervening into the architectural frame of the site itself. This type of intervention subverted the design conventions of art galleries that had developed in tandem with high modernist critique, and were thus able to draw attention to how those conventions had shaped the parameters of audience reception. Just as Althusser claimed that an individual's beliefs are formed in intimate relation to the material practices that that individual repeats. Asher's pieces explored the relationship between audience response and gallery design conventions. Depending, then, upon the level of familiarity each visitor had with art galleries in general, and with this individual gallery in particular, as well as upon her awareness, or lack thereof, of broad movements within the art world, Asher's pieces were capable of effecting a variety of affective responses, as the visitor noted the disruption of a common and conventionalised display format and/or the manipulation of a particular and familiar architectural space. The installations required the visitor to negotiate her own bodily presence in relation to novel compressions and expansions of this space; the impact of the work upon her was intended to register in contrast to the norms of encounter within such a gallery context. Thus, the confounding of the audience's expectations served as the critical motor within Asher's work. The two installations are comprehensible, then, both in terms of their departure from, and their perpetuation of, the white cube gallery format. Any expectations with which a visitor approached the work were confounded by it, and any new modes of engagement that the visitor might attempt to formulate within this unexpected experience would, in turn, foreground her prior expectations. Commenting upon her experience in Asher's Clocktower Gallery installation (New York, 1976), Nancy Foote noted that she found herself thinking about 'how one ought to be reacting, and [...] if one is really getting it.'<sup>126</sup> Foote's comments emphasise the opportunity that Asher's installations presented to visitors—the opportunity to critically reflect upon

---

<sup>126</sup> Kirsi Peltomäki, *Situation Aesthetics: The Work Of Michael Asher* (The MIT Press: Massachusetts, 2010), p. 48.

their own expectations of modern art exhibitions and engage with the practice of critique initiated by the artist in the conception and realisation of the work.

These critical engagements with altered gallery environments were theorised in Victor Burgin's essay, 'Situation Aesthetics' (1969), which was used by Asher to articulate his practice.<sup>127</sup> Burgin noted the shift in focus in some works produced in the late 1960s towards 'the conditions under which objects are perceived and to the processes by which aesthetic status is attributed to some of these.'<sup>128</sup> He posited that works like Asher's were 'largely contingent upon the details of the situation for which it is designed [and] intentionally located partly in real, exterior, space and partly in psychological, interior, space.'<sup>129</sup> He identified these works with an examination of situational cues, such as white walls, spot lighting and exhibition signage, which signified to visitors the establishment of an exhibition context. The manner in which Asher intervened within gallery spaces interrupted and drew emphasis to the critical function of these situational cues, directing the viewer's attention onto how these background features shaped encounters with art. Within these installations, the viewer's own preconceptions were foregrounded, but were no longer met, so that the visitors were invited to critically reflect upon their own expectations. Burgin notes, '[When] we observe change in a place to which we have returned after an absence, we compare past and present configurations, or more accurately we superimpose a memorised configuration upon a configuration present upon the retina'.<sup>130</sup> In this sense, one might extend one's perception of the work from an intervention made by the artist within the material structure of the gallery to an ongoing critical re-examination of expectations that might take place in the minds of exhibition visitors, both within and beyond the installation. The installations, therefore, addressed the apparatus through which modern art attained autonomy from the praxis of life within America in the late 1960s, addressing its construction simultaneously on architectural, socio-political and psychological levels.

From within this apparatus Asher's installations took the form of a negative critique. They engaged an existing social construct – the modern art gallery – and

<sup>127</sup> Victor Burgin, 'Situational Aesthetics', *Studio International*, 178:915 (October 1969), 118-121, p. 118.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid..

<sup>129</sup> Ibid..

<sup>130</sup> Victor Burgin, *Situational Aesthetics: Selected Writings by Victor Burgin*, Lieven Gevert Series Vol. 9 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009), p. 12.

sought to expose the aspects of its existence that were suppressed in its operation. By re-structuring the syntagmatic relations that ordered visitors' approach to, entrance into and occupancy of the Pomona Art Centre, the artist dismantled the opposition of interior and exterior space that underpinned the establishment of the art centre as a specialised site of artistic display.<sup>131</sup> This was achieved by displacing components of the art centre's distinct spaces onto those adjacent to them. The ceilings adopted the clean white qualities of the walls and the galleries took on the same corridor-like qualities of the lobby. Visitors' psychological responses as they moved through these changing spaces became the work's focus, and the intended discontinuity between their encounter and their expectations of that encounter, invited the possibility of extending the critique to how such a convention of display might inform the pre-conceptions of visitors. Thus, by intervening within the existing architecture of such galleries, Asher generated installations that were operative in nature, because they were activated by the individual and collective responses of their visitors. Asher notes,

A critical analysis of the gallery structure was developed by a small number of artists in the late 1960s and early 1970s, at a time when they viewed their role as artists as that of individual producers with the right to control totally, not only the production, but also the distribution of their works.<sup>132</sup>

By disrupting norms of encounter and thus visitors' patterns of behaviour within the gallery, Asher's installations invited visitors to reflect upon the pre-established roles into which the art galleries projected them. The critical basis of such encounters was generated by the discontinuity that existed between the installation and the way it re-configured the gallery space, and the expectations that each viewer was likely to project onto the site as she approached it. Critical responses to these installations increasingly identified them with an examination of the significance of the white cube format and the conditions of audience reception that it generated—a shift from the minimalist examination of the material structure of the gallery environment to an examination of

---

<sup>131</sup> Here I refer to the sequence of movement from the external space outside the gallery, through transitional lobbies and corridors to the internal space of the gallery itself, and how, like the sequential relation of linguistic units within a sentence, these architectural components interlink and cooperate, formalising for visitors the sense of movement from an exterior to an interior space.

<sup>132</sup> Michael Asher, 'On Works 1969 to 1979', in *Conceptual Art*, ed. by Peter Osborne (New York: Phaidon Press, 2002), p. 278.

the socially determined conditions of reception within these spaces. This architectural frame, a frame that conditioned responses to displays of art, became the subject and site of Asher's interventionist practice: a shift that Craig Owens described in the title of his 1992 article as moving 'From Work to Frame'.<sup>133</sup>

Subsequent criticism has largely followed this line of argument. In her 1990 article, Anne Rormier claimed that in Asher's 'Spaces' exhibit:

[a]s the walls were built especially to absorb sound, visitors' distance from the exit and entry doors proportionately regulated the degree of exterior sound heard inside. By thus defining the interior space of the work in accordance with its exterior, Asher pointed to the fact that the piece, a hollow container, was not self-contained, but linked with the ambient sounds and lighting in the museum.<sup>134</sup>

The interaction that Asher's displacements generated between the internal space of the gallery and the contexts of life outside provided the audience with a means by which to examine how the feelings they might have of containment and seclusion were a product of divisions made both by walls and by the ways that those divisions were interpreted. In Owens' discussion of Asher's practice, he describes Asher's procedure as '*displacement*: elements are either moved or removed from their "original" contexts, so that their contradictions can be examined'.<sup>135</sup> Thus, for Owens, the function performed by the gallery is irreconcilable with its relation to its surroundings. Thomas Crow also identified Asher's works with contradiction. Crow comments, '[The installation's] presence is in terminal contradiction to the nature of the space it occupies'.<sup>136</sup> By critiquing the enclosing function of the gallery space, the installation brings emphasis to the conflicting tensions that are internal to the space itself. As Crow says, 'Contradiction is the source of its articulateness'.<sup>137</sup> The consistent point communicated by this body of criticism was that the displacements of gallery architecture that shaped Asher's practice

<sup>133</sup> Craig Owens, 'From Work to Frame, or, Is There Life After "The Death of The Author"', in Craig Owens, *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power and Culture* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 122–142.

<sup>134</sup> Anne Rormier, 'Michael Asher: Context as Content', *Texte Zur Kunst*, 1 (September 1990), 151–162

<sup>135</sup> Craig Owens, 1992, p. 133.

<sup>136</sup> Thomas Crow, 'Site-Specific Art: The Strong and the Weak', in Thomas Crow, *Modern Art and Modern Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 135.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid..

at this time served to demonstrate how the production of an internal space for artistic appreciation existed as an unresolvable project that maintained itself by obscuring the manner in which galleries were inter-articulated with the spaces and structures that were external to them.<sup>138</sup> Asher's installations made a negative critique that articulated contradictions inherent within the social construction of the white cube gallery that shaped artistic reception in America in the late 1960s: the capacity of the gallery frame to separate spaces of artistic reception from the praxis of life. Displacing components of these architectural frames – a methodology the artist developed out of a minimalist critique of high modernist art – the artist was able to emphasise the role that in gallery frame performed in producing the separation of art and life.

## 9. Inside the White Cube

Asher's critical interventions within America's modern art galleries was matched by an intervention within America's art press made by the art critic/theorist and artist Brian O'Doherty. O'Doherty focused upon how the convention of the modern art gallery had maintained itself and flourished against the contradictions exposed by Asher and groups such as the Art Workers' Coalition. In 1976, across three issues of the magazine *Artforum*, O'Doherty published 'Inside the White Cube', the first comprehensive analysis of modern art galleries as arenas capable of conditioning audience responses to the exhibits inside them.<sup>139</sup> *Inside the White Cube*, which was re-printed as a book in 1986 with the addition of a further essay, 'Gallery as Gesture', and which will be my main reference point in analysing his argument, has come to be regarded as O'Doherty's major work, and has led to the subsequent texts, *Beyond the White Cube* (2006) (which comprised a retrospective, catalogue and conference, all orchestrated by the Hugh Lane Gallery in Dublin), and *Studio and Cube: On the relationship between where art is*

---

<sup>138</sup> Similar lines of argument are advanced by Julie H. Reiss in *From Margin to Centre: The Spaces of Installation Art* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1999) and in Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object in Contemporary Art* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 2003).

<sup>139</sup> O'Doherty's contribution also manifested itself as rope and labyrinth installations, produced from the mid 1960s, and exhibited under the alias of Patrick Ireland after 1972; the editorship of a double issue of *Aspen* magazine; and the guest editorship of the July 1971 issue of the art magazine *Art in America* titled 'Museums in Crisis'.

*made and displayed* (2007).<sup>140</sup> (In Chapter Two, I will add to the analysis undertaken here by considering the relationship between the editorial choices O'Doherty made in publishing *Aspen 5 + 6* in 1967 and the signifying framework of the white cube gallery.)

O'Doherty's analysis shares Smithson's focus on the role played by language in the interpretations that viewers brought to bear upon the gallery, and considers how preconceptions shaped these responses. To do this, O'Doherty focuses his analysis on the historical development of debates on modernist art and the corresponding curatorial practices in order to account for the historical production of the dominant perception of the gallery space as a purified environment of artistic contemplation.<sup>141</sup> O'Doherty's thesis proposes that developments in gallery and exhibition design throughout the twentieth century can be seen to parallel the rise to prominence of high modernist theory and practice. The March 1976 issue of *Artforum* contained the first instalment of 'Inside the White Cube', the article 'Notes from the Gallery Space', which encapsulated what O'Doherty considered to be the nature of this relationship. The *Artforum* cover image featured a quotation from the article reproduced within the magazine super-imposed over a photograph of a typical post-war modern art gallery that featured pristine white walls, wooden floors and track lighting. The quotation was positioned centre-right of the page so that it was framed by the white gallery walls and appeared hung, like a painting, on the wall; it declared, 'The history of modernism is intimately framed by the gallery space.... An image comes to mind of a white, ideal space that, more than any single picture, may be the archetypal image of 20th-century art'<sup>142</sup> (Fig. 21). The photograph, of course, illustrated the type of gallery described in the quote. Positioned as if it were on the wall, the caption apparently installed a specific art-theoretical discourse (high modernist criticism) within the material structure of the gallery.

<sup>140</sup> Brian O'Doherty, *Studio and Cube*, (New York: The Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture, 2007); Christina Kennedy and Georgian Jackson eds., *Beyond the White Cube: A Retrospective of Brian O'Doherty/Patrick Ireland* (Dublin: Hugh Lane Gallery, 2006).

<sup>141</sup> Robert Smithson, 'What is a Museum?' in Flam, 1996, pp. 43-44.

<sup>142</sup> *Artforum*, Vol. 14, No. 7 (March 1976), front cover.



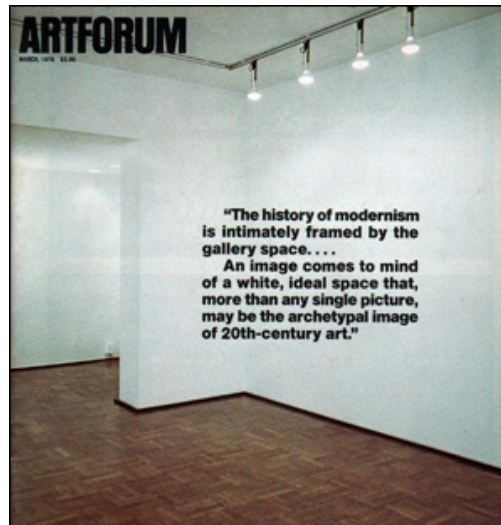


Fig. 21, *Artforum*, Vol. 14, No. 7 (March 1976), front cover.

O'Doherty's work examined the reciprocal relationship between ideas about art and the places in which art was exhibited, firstly by analysing the conditions of reception within a typical white cube space, and secondly by considering the relationship between changes in gallery and exhibition design and changes within twentieth century painting practices – the progressive shedding of representational content and the emergence of abstract pictorial space.

Whilst Smithson sought to escape the grip of modernist doctrine by describing spaces that were characterised by emptiness and nullification, O'Doherty felt that the ideology of purification that underpinned high modernism, thus sustaining the separation of art and life, was the engine that continued to power the function performed by white cube galleries in the 1970s. O'Doherty thought that white cubes isolated works of art within bright, white, uniform and chamber-like environments, presenting displays within spaces that seemed devoid of external reference. He claimed that '[t]he ideal gallery subtracts from the artworks all cues that interfere with the fact that it is 'art'. The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its evaluation of itself.'<sup>143</sup> Creating such a sense of isolation meant not only enclosing the space in such a way that the world beyond became irrelevant to the experience within, but also creating an internal space that appeared immune to change. Just as the enclosing walls were designed to raise the gallery beyond the transitory, O'Doherty also claimed that their uniform white surfaces, illuminating ceilings and polished floors were designed to

<sup>143</sup> Brian O'Doherty, 1986, p. 14.

suggest a space purified of all particularity, thus producing an environment capable of performing a 'transposition of perception from life to formal values'.<sup>144</sup> The outcome was an environment in which the art 'exists in a kind of eternity of display' that offered the gallery 'a limbo-like status'.<sup>145</sup> In his introduction to the 1986 publication of *Inside the White Cube*, Thomas McEvelley emphasised the effect that such spaces could have upon the exhibits. He related white cubes to a lineage of chambers, such as Egyptian tombs, that attempt to construct a supposedly unchanging space, or, rather, a space where the effects of change are deliberately disguised, so that the exhibits within can be made to appear timeless with the effect of suggesting 'artistic posterity'.<sup>146</sup>

O'Doherty argued that these environments were cultivated in support of high modernist art, which shared a similar rhetoric of purification and timelessness. Though his argument does not explicitly cite Clement Greenberg, it shares the same historicist trajectory, considering that within this shared history the gallery space 'clarifies itself through a process of historical inevitability usually attached to the art it contains'.<sup>147</sup> By focusing upon the removal of the frame from the stretcher, the thinning of the 'hang' and the emergence of the white, brightly lit chambers that Asher addressed in his practice, O'Doherty countered Greenberg's thesis by emphasising the importance of the context of display in shaping the audience member's relationship with the works presented. In short, he examined how the cultivation of a seemingly timeless and purified environment facilitated the modes of encounter that Greenberg felt rested only in the audience member's visual relationship with the works themselves. O'Doherty notes, 'the presence of that odd piece of furniture, your own body, seems superfluous, an intrusion. The space offers the thought that whilst eyes and minds are welcome, space occupying bodies are not'.<sup>148</sup>

O'Doherty's point was that artworks exist in relation to contextual factors, some of which serve to facilitate the perception that artworks can function independently of their surroundings, precisely because they locate the work in what appears to be a purified space: such was the function of the white wall. Others – the stretcher's edge and depth, the plinth, the picture frames – demarcated the difference between the space of

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid..

<sup>146</sup> Thomas McEvelley, in *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 15

the gallery and the work. O'Doherty says,

The inch of the stretcher's width amounts to a formal abyss. The easel picture is not transferable to the wall, and one wants to know why. [...] If you copied a late modernist easel picture onto the wall and then hung the easel picture next to it, you could estimate the degree of illusionism that turned up in the faultless literal pedigree of the easel picture. At the same time, the rigid mural would underline the importance of surface and edges to the easel picture, now beginning to hover close to an objecthood defined by the "literal" remnants of illusionism – an unstable area.<sup>149</sup>

O'Doherty emphasises the function performed by the stretcher's edge, marking the border between the inert, uniform blank wall and the luminous, illusory field of the easel picture. By demarcating this opposition of picture and wall and establishing the work as the focal point, the edge sets up conditions under which the work and wall reciprocally influence how the viewer encounters the other. Without the white wall, the work's context would start to intrude in the viewer's encounter, and without the focal point of the work, one's attention would be drawn to the chalky surfaces of emulsion paint, and, rather than working as the purified space described by O'Doherty, the gallery would merely read as an empty architectural container.

In the two models of encounter, then, that emerged, respectively, from theorisations of high modernist and minimalist art, the work and its context of presentation appear to be locked into a set of oppositional interactions. This is exactly the point set forth in O'Doherty's second essay, 'The Eye and the Spectator', which appeared in the April 1976 issue of *Artforum*. Here he argues that it is within the experience of the viewer that this relation is mediated:

The mainstream as scheduled from Cezanne to the Colour Field glides along the wall, [and] measures it with vertical and horizontal coordinates. This is the etiquette of normal social discourse, and through it the mainstream viewer is continually re-introduced to the wall, which in turn supports the canvas – its

---

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

surface now so sensitive that an object on it would cause it, as it were, to blink.<sup>150</sup>

O'Doherty is describing the development of norms of viewership in tandem with forms of modernist art that increasingly drew upon the uniform blankness of the white wall. Therefore, to view the work in the manner described by Fried and Greenberg, one has to *not* see the wall; the wall is, for them, not present in the viewer's encounter, as it goes unseen or, at least, unnoticed. The specificity of each white wall is lost and the gallery space becomes open to more generalised projections of purity and timelessness on the part of the viewer. In contrast, within minimalist installations, as noted by Morris, the work remains the viewer's focal point within the gallery, but it is experienced in dynamic interaction with the specific particular environmental conditions within the empty white space that it occupied. In a later reflection upon the construction of audience encounters within minimalist installations, Morris states that the artwork 'participates in a complex experience that includes the object, your body, the space and the time of your experience.'<sup>151</sup> Concurring with Fried's contrast of *art* and *objecthood*, O'Doherty considers breaking the illusion of pictorial depth, as three-dimensional works such as Morris's did, destroying the coherence of the picture as a single illusory field, but also destroying the role performed by the gallery as a purified backdrop; instead, the gallery is seen as an actual, impure space, and the viewer is potentially alerted both to the space and to its contents as contents, which includes her own body.<sup>152</sup>

O'Doherty's argument links contrasting modes of encounter offered by high modernist and minimalist art with notions of abstraction and reality.

Abstraction and reality – not realism – conduct a rancorous argument throughout modernism. The picture plane, like an exclusive country club, keeps reality out and for good reason. Snobbishness is, after all, a form of purity [...]. Reality [...] has a vulgar set of relations and is frequently seen slumming among the senses with other antithetical arts.<sup>153</sup>

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>151</sup> Robert Morris interviewed by Nick Kaye, in Nick Kaye, *Site Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 27.

<sup>152</sup> Fried, *Art and Objecthood*.

<sup>153</sup> O'Doherty, 1986, p. 38.

He identifies two competing historical modes of viewership that rest on the dual construction of the gallery as an idealised space and its literal articulation as a material construct. In the first, the viewer is conceptualised as a floating, disembodied presence that hovers around the camera lens in installation shots of exhibitions of high modernist painting. O'Doherty refers to this construction as 'the eye'.<sup>154</sup> The second, who populates minimalist and environmental installations and environmental works, is referred to by O'Doherty as 'the spectator', a viewer who traverses the gallery, responding to the exhibition with all of her senses.<sup>155</sup> In the first model, for 'the eye', the gallery is an idealised backdrop to the high modernist purification of pictorial space, and in the second, the materiality of displays—which nevertheless also become objects of contemplation by virtue of their presence within the gallery—projects 'the spectator's' attention out towards the ambient space and the architectural frame, making the context of presentation part of the experience of the work. O'Doherty's historical account emphasises that, over time, these competing modes of encounter become identifiable with the gallery space itself, where, 'at this point, as Minimalism demonstrated, art can be literalised and detransformed; the gallery will make it art anyway'.<sup>156</sup> He continues, 'Idealism is hard to extinguish in art, because the empty gallery itself becomes *art manqué* and so preserves it'.<sup>157</sup> Thus, in O'Doherty's analysis, the white cube is a relational construct, the significance of which in the mind of any given viewer is a composite of the existing structure of the site, the works on display and the manner of their arrangement, and the audience's prior exposure to white cube contexts—both the actual spaces, and their representation and reportage. Key to O'Doherty's argument is that, as the history of the convention lengthens, so does the grasp of pre-conceptions upon viewer experiences, until, as he notes, the space itself is what comes to guide any viewer encounter, and the gallery and what it has come to mean gains primacy over exhibits and audience. O'Doherty writes, 'we have now reached a point where we see not the art but the *space* first'.<sup>158</sup>

---

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p. 42

<sup>155</sup> Ibid..

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid..

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

## 10. The Expanded Field

The critiques made by both Asher and O'Doherty maintain gallery space to be a material construct coded through the debates that shaped the production of high modernist and minimalist art. Through these readings the tripartite relation of work, gallery and audience appear as components of a broader structure: the art exhibition, which is structured through a common language of display and reception. The critic Rosalind E. Krauss offered a systematic analysis of how such a structure underpinned the emergence of site specific works such as Asher's in her 1978 essay, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', which set out to explain and validate, the decision shared by both Asher and O'Doherty to perform a negative critique that was immanent to the gallery space. Krauss emerged as a critical voice in early writings, such as her book on David Smith, *Terminal Iron Works* (1971), which pursued an interest in medium specificity that was similar to Greenberg's; subsequently, though, in later writings such as *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (1977), she questioned modernist doctrine, focusing in this case upon the importance of time in the spatial art of sculpture.<sup>159</sup> Consequently, Krauss chose instead to engage with the emerging field of interventionist and site specific practitioners that she described as a 'motley effort' of artists, including Asher, all of whom responded to both architecture and the landscape in ways that resisted integration into existing debates regarding modernist and minimalist works.<sup>160</sup> Krauss argued that these modes of practice had resisted theorisation because they had not developed in the linear channel of medium specificity through which historicist criticism sought to explain artistic development. They marked instead the emergence of an expanded field that had been

---

<sup>159</sup> In her later book, *The Optical Unconscious* (1994), Krauss chronicled the doubts that led to this departure. Here she described how reading the concluding line of *Art and Objecthood* ('presentness is grace'), [Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, p. 168] filled her 'with a dizzying sense of disbelief' [Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), p. 6.], and how subsequent conversations with Fried had led her to understand these sentiments in relation to a mode of encounter offered up by artists like Frank Stella, in which vision was 'pared away into a dazzle of pure instantaneity, into an abstract condition with no before or after'. [Ibid., p. 7]. According to Fried's argument, the presence of the work in the viewer's visual field allowed her to grasp the nature of her own visual sensibility unadulterated by tactile or temporal dimensions—what she saw out there matched and allowed her to grasp the essence of her visual sense. Such an arrest of the viewer's continuously projected gaze in an instantaneously apprehended, singular vision was ultimately conveyed in quasi-theological terms in the final line of Fried's essay. This was the line that Krauss claimed produced in her 'a shudder like a lining ripping open so that the ideological seams showed through.' [Ibid., p. 8.]

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

'generated by problematising the set of oppositions between which the modernist category of sculpture is suspended.'<sup>161</sup> They responded to the structural interaction of work, site and audience that at this time she considered to be characteristic of 'a situation of postmodernism', within which 'practice is not defined in relation to a given medium – sculpture – but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium – photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors or sculpture itself – might be used'.<sup>162</sup>

In keeping with Fried's insistence that high modernist art possessed a pictorial structure and thus transcended its objecthood, Krauss considered that modernist sculptors such as Brancusi had, for a limited historical period, produced works that possessed a self-reflexive formal structure that enabled them to transcend their context by marking themselves out as autonomous spatial signs. They worked within 'a kind of idealist space [...] a vein that was rich and new and could for a while be profitably mined.'<sup>163</sup> Krauss considered that minimalist work reduced modernist sculpture to a condition of pure negativity: 'what is in the room that is not really the room'.<sup>164</sup> She argued that three-dimensional works, such as those that comprised Morris's Green Gallery exhibition (1964), occupied the condition 'not-architecture' (Morris continued to refer to them as sculptures.) According to Morris, internal relations within these works were reduced to the projection of a single shape (the *gestalts* to which the artist referred) that the viewer experienced in relation to the architectural structure of the gallery and his own position within it.

The category of *not-architecture* marked the limits of modernist sculptural practice, to which Krauss added the category *not-landscape* for works sited in nature. The procedure at the heart of this process was negation. According to Krauss's structuralist modelling, conventions of modernist sculpture that conceived the work in terms of self-referentiality, were established in a relation of opposition to the context of display. According to Krauss's argument for a work to function in these terms the contextual relationships to which it is bound must be suppressed; a contradiction that is then internalised in the manner of the work's presentation and reception. In contrast,

---

<sup>161</sup> Rosalind Krauss, 1979, p. 38.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.



works that fall into the category of not-architecture, such as that produced by Morris at the Green Gallery, strip the sculptural form of internal relationships, engaging it with the context of its presentation.<sup>165</sup> With installations such as Morris's, the linear narrative of modernist reductivism is fragmented into a set of contextual relationships generated between the work and site in relation to the shifting positions of the viewer within the gallery space. Krauss was interested in the conditions under which these emergent practices might be understood to be responding to a set of structural possibilities. Once realised as modes of practice, not-architecture and not-landscape also created further possibilities of development, as they admitted to the field of art the previously excluded terms, landscape and architecture. Thus, in Krauss's formulation, minimalist and interventionist installations emerged through the dismantling of modernist sculpture into the framework of display in which it was situated. The overcoming of autonomous art that Bürger identified with the historical avant-gardes was re-framed here in a context in which Modernist practice was understood as one aspect of a socio-linguistic structure that made social spaces like art galleries meaningful. Krauss considered that postmodernist artists such as Asher were engaged in disarticulating modernist practice by progressively synthesising it with terms that were in a state of opposition to it.

Krauss included diagrams within the essay that she borrowed from semiotician Julien Greimas's 'square of opposition'.<sup>166</sup> For Greimas, units of meaning exist as contrary terms of positive assertion and negation, married to one another as a binary pair. This is the complex axis, and on Krauss's diagram, these terms are landscape and architecture. Because the terms are contradictory, a lower tier is also generated, known as the neuter axis, which, for Krauss, means not-landscape and not-architecture. Terms that are opposed diagonally on the diagram, furthermore, can be understood to imply one another, as Krauss explains: '*[N]ot-architecture* is, according to the logic of a certain kind of expansion, just another way of expressing the term *landscape*, and the *not-landscape* is, simply, *architecture*'.<sup>167</sup> The inclusion of these diagrams supplemented Krauss's text by drawing out the coordinates of the expanded field as a set of structural possibilities for sculpture and other variants of three-dimensional work in cultural

---

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>166</sup> A. J. Greimas and François Rastier, 'The Interaction of Semiotic Constraints', *Yale French Studies*, 41, 'Game, Play, Literature' (1968), 86-105.

<sup>167</sup> Krauss, 1979, p. 37.

(built) and natural (not-built) spaces (Fig. 22).

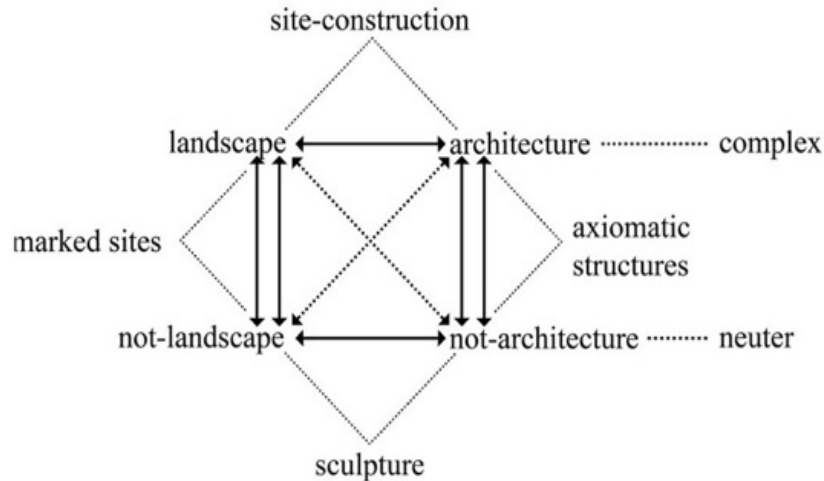


Fig. 22, Diagram from Krauss's essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', Rosalind Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', *October*, Vol. 8. (Spring, 1979), p. 37.

Yet this system did not adequately capture the proliferation of diverse practices with which Krauss was engaged. Asher's installations fell between architecture and not-architecture, because they drew upon minimalist practice and yet derived their structure from the architectural organisation of the galleries in which he worked. Krauss conceived of practices like Asher's as axiomatic structures that '[mapped] the axiomatic features of the architectural experience.'<sup>168</sup> Axioms present themselves as uncontroversially evident postulates that are understood to lay the foundations for further analysis. In this instance, Krauss's use of the term refers to the principles that structure the site's intelligibility, both in terms of the interpretative frameworks employed by the viewer and the physical, external architectural organisation of the site.<sup>169</sup> The axioms with which Asher's works set out to engage were the objectives of modern art exhibitions—the purification of space and visual encounter—and, as a consequence, the work was manufactured through intervention within the architectural conditions of reception that arose out of these axioms. Yet, as we have seen, these axioms in their material articulation were able to suppress the contradictions they contained (the space and activity beyond the gallery walls, and the continuum of

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>169</sup> Elsewhere, Krauss describes perspective as axiomatic because it meant that 'the space of the phenomenal world could be understood as unified by a system of coordinates independent of "raw" perception.' Krauss, 'LeWitt in Progress', *October*, 6 (Autumn, 1978), 46-60, p. 56.

viewer's full sensorium). The objective of Asher's interventions was to draw forth the function of the modern art gallery and expose the contradictions against which it had to maintain itself.

The origin of these installations, then, in this sense, was the white cube gallery. By dismantling and/or intensifying the material structures of these enclosures, and thus disarticulating their function, Asher foregrounded these conventions and contradictions. The design remit that infused the production of white cube spaces and the ideologies that operated through them were used, by Asher, as a visual language for the purposes of subversion: the work communicated to its audience by manipulating the structures, ambiances and significations of the manipulated gallery spaces. These acts of intervention worked against the probable expectations of the audience and, as a consequence, might be imagined as having a before-and-after effect upon audience members that led them to contrast the organisation of the space they entered with the more conventional forms of gallery design that had structured their expectations of the space before they entered it.

## 11. Postmodern Allegory

Each of the critiques that I have examined draws upon a theoretical shift towards the use of allegory as an explanatory framework for such site-specific practices that can be understood in relation to Krauss's category of axiomatic structures. Craig Owens' essay, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism', published in the journal *October* (1980; co-edited by Krauss), was pivotal in this respect.<sup>170</sup> Owens considers that the critique enacted by works such as as Asher's upon the sites into which they intervened lends them an allegorical structure. He notes that site-specific works 'engage in a reading of the site [such that] work and site thus stand in a dialectical relationship.'<sup>171</sup> Site-specific works are, according to Owens, allegorical in structure, in that 'one text is read through another, however fragmentary, intermittent, or chaotic their

<sup>170</sup> Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism', published in two parts, *October*, 12 (Spring 1980), 67-86, and *October*, 13 (Summer 1980), 59-80. Another example is Douglas Crimp's essays from the early 1980s, anthologised in *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993).

<sup>171</sup> Owens, 1980b, p. 71.

relationship may be; the paradigm for the allegorical work is thus the palimpsest'.<sup>172</sup> Palimpsests are re-usable writing media from which text can be scrapped off, allowing new writing to be inscribed on top, and wherein, with each new inscription, traces of former texts yet remain. In the case of Asher's installations, the artist works with an existing architectural construct in ways that critically interrogate its mode of operation. Owens extends this discussion and argues that allegory is also characteristic of postmodernism, contrasting this analysis with the importance of the symbol for modernism.<sup>173</sup> He notes that, 'like all conceptual pairs, the two are far from evenly matched. In modern aesthetics, allegory is regularly subordinated to the symbol, which represents the supposedly indissoluble unity of form and substance, which characterises the work of art as pure presence'.<sup>174</sup> The reciprocity between the colour field and the visual sensibility of the beholder that characterised discussions of high modernist art could be seen as an example of such an analysis of the symbol. In contrast, the language Owens uses to characterise allegorical works (appropriation, supplementation, fragmentation, disjuncture) is characteristic of the kind of working into existing scenarios/conventions with which Asher is engaged.<sup>175</sup> Referring to the proximity that exists between such interventionist practices and the theoretical analyses of figures like Krauss, Gail Day claims that the 'opposition of allegory and symbol coincided with the broader project of *October* and its opposition to Greenbergian modernism'.<sup>176</sup>

The shift that Day narrates moves from the intimacy of a visual encounter with a singular field of colour that transcends the material support of the easel painting to the discontinuity of an encounter with a manipulated architectural construct. The projected reception of high modernist works (as symbols) by the audience member depends upon her facing the work and finding something like a correlate of her own visual field within it—the purification of the pictorial that was so important to Fried and Greenberg's arguments.<sup>177</sup> Minimalist practice resisted this transcendence by embracing materiality,

---

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>173</sup> This is similar to the way in which Krauss contrasts modernist medium specificity and the manipulation of a cultural, and thus coded, scenario. For more details, see Rosalind Krauss, 1979.

<sup>174</sup> Owens, 1980b, p. 81.

<sup>175</sup> For 'appropriation' see Owens, 1980a, p. 81, 'supplement' and 'fragmentary', p. 69, and 'disjunction', p. 72.

<sup>176</sup> Gail Day, 'Allegory: Between Deconstruction and Dialectics', *Oxford Art Journal*, 22:1 (1999), 105-118, p. 105.

<sup>177</sup> Owens makes reference to the status ascribed to the symbol in twentieth century aesthetic theory in ways that underpin this assertion. He uses a quotation from Benedetto Croce to show how within the

in a move that saw both support and work collapse into one another, making the work's formal structure function to convey the empirical qualities of the materials used. This shift from medium specificity to material specificity was captured by Judd's negative introduction of his own notion of three-dimensional work: 'Half or more of the best new work in the last few years has been neither painting nor sculpture.'<sup>178</sup> In his 1986 essay, 'The Crux of Minimalism', Hal Foster argued that minimalism represented a rupture with modernism that then set the stage for the development of materially and contextually responsive modes of practice.<sup>179</sup> Foster follows the line of modernist criticism that perceived minimalism in terms of 'the quotidian, the utilitarian, the non-artistic', but also claims that this development opened the way for practices of institutional critique to 'reflect upon the contextual conditions of art'.<sup>180</sup> Foster notes,

[W]ith Minimalism, sculpture no longer stands apart on a pedestal or as pure art, but it is repositioned among objects and redefined in terms of place. In this transformation the viewer, refused the safe, sovereign space of formal art, is cast back on the here and now; and rather than scan the work for a topographical mapping of the properties of its medium, he or she is prompted to explore the perceptual consequences of a particular intervention in a given site. This is the fundamental reorientation that Minimalism inaugurates.<sup>181</sup>

In Foster's formulation, then, minimalism usefully breaks with modernist frameworks of artistic production in order to enter the a broader field of social interactions: a move that paves the way for the subsequent development of architectural intervention. Foster's argument identifies minimalism with a break from high modernism and therefore medium specificity, allowing a return to avant-garde modes of intervention. Foster claims, 'only an analysis that allows for both parts of the Minimalist equation – the

---

modernist tradition the symbol is understood to assert the intimate correlation between the viewer's look and the address made to that look by the work, which can in this way be understood to raise the audience member to behold, through the vehicle of the work, the essential nature of their own visual sensibility. Croce says, 'Now if the symbol be conceived as inseparable from the artistic intuition, it is a synonym for the intuition itself, which always has an ideal character.' Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic*, trans. by Douglas Ainslie (New York: The Noonday Press, 1966), pp. 34-35.

<sup>178</sup> Donald Judd, 'Specific Objects', *Arts Yearbook*, 8 (1965); reprinted in Judd, 1975, pp. 181-189.

<sup>179</sup> Hal Foster, in Singerman, ed., 1996, pp. 35-71.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*.

break with late Modernism and the return to the avant-garde – can begin to account for the advanced art of the last thirty years or so.<sup>182</sup> I argue in keeping with the argument developed by Krauss that minimalism did not constitute a break with high modernism, but instead dismantled its core conventions into the arena of display itself. Following the structuralist model developed by Krauss, it becomes possible to see what appears as a rupture in terms of a renegotiation of relationships between components that normally structure art exhibitions. Thus Krauss's understanding of axiomatic structures and Owens's formulation of allegory present an alternative approach by situating postmodern practice in terms of the critical dialogue it establishes with frameworks of artistic reception. The pattern of development identified by Krauss and Owens implies both a shift in focus from the picture plane to the architectural structure, and from the purification of visual experience to critical operations designed to draw forth the ideological pre-suppositions that underpin the conventions of the white cube gallery. Asher's installations also offer a critique of architectural spaces—though not as an enquiry directed towards the empirical qualities of materials, as was the case with minimalism, but rather, as an enquiry directed towards the social meanings that code and define the function of the gallery. The reformulation of art practice in which Asher played a prominent role, then, set in motion a pattern of development within what Krauss later described as critical postmodernism, the complexities of which Greimas's diagrams of opposition ultimately fail to accommodate. Outside of the modernist recourse to the senses, artistic media and the frameworks of social interaction upon which they rested soon appeared to artists of Asher's generation seeking to examine the social construction of artistic display as (unstable) structures in their own right—nodes within frameworks of signification and value.

Krauss's subsequent post-millennial engagements with installation art have continued to examine how artists working in changed historical circumstances have continued to appropriate aspects of display environments as media (Krauss now prefers the term technical support) through which to structure their practice. In contrast she critiques modes of installation practice that she believes uncritically use the bounding frame of the gallery space as a way in which to code arrangements of objects, images, and even forms of social interaction as art, referring to them in terms of a 'post-medium

---

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

condition'.<sup>183</sup>

Work such as Krauss's *A Voyage on the North Sea* will serve as a lens through which, in the third and final chapter of this study, I will consider recent practices that rely upon (post-medium art) and critically engage with the architectural structure of the gallery space, in a socio-historical context in which such material sites are increasingly determined in relation to forms of social mediation and communication/transportation networks. Setting up this discussion in the next chapter, I will examine Owens's model of the palimpsest in relation to an installation that Asher produced within the Claire Copley Gallery in Los Angeles in 1976, considering how the artist's intervention within this gallery framed the institutional structure of this private gallery.

---

<sup>183</sup> For Krauss's discussion on the post-medium condition, see Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage Upon the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), pp. 5-7.



## Chapter Two: Institution as Medium

### Introduction

Michael Asher's integration of the interior spaces of the Gladys K. Montgomery Art Centre highlighted the twin functions of enclosing and screening that was ordinarily performed by this conventional white cube space.<sup>184</sup> In the art centre's standard configuration, the doors staged acts of entry and exit, whilst the foyer mediated passage into the rear gallery space. In this new configuration, whilst there was a dark and secluded rear space, the removal of the front entrance meant that visitors could still feel the breeze and hear the traffic outside. Subsequently, in a work that Asher presented between 21<sup>st</sup> September and 12<sup>th</sup> October 1974 in the Claire Copley Gallery on La Ceinega Boulevard in the centre of the Los Angeles gallery district, the artist extended his engagement with the function of screening in the production of white cube gallery environments from the enclosure of space to the production of subdivisions within the gallery site itself; he did this by removing a partition wall that separated the office space from the exhibition area. In this chapter, I will look at this installation and its repercussions for the development of Asher's practice. This analysis will enable me to solidify and extend the socio-linguistic structure of white cube conventions identified in Chapter One, by considering the importance of literal and rhetorical levels of meaning in shaping the function of white cube conventions, deployed here as a screen behind which to obscure the socio-economic reality of this commercial gallery space, and the commodity status of its displays.

---

<sup>184</sup> According to the then director of the art centre, Hal Glicksman, these displacements of architectural structure generated new ways of engaging with the space. '[S]tudents who didn't particularly have any ideas about what art was supposed to be, and weren't even art students just hung out in there. They just thought it was absolutely wonderful.' (Hal Glicksman interviewed by Rebecca McGrew, Hal Glicksman's home, Santa Monica, California, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008:

<http://www.pomona.edu/museum/exhibitions/2011/part-1-hal-glicksman-at-pomona/index.aspx/> [accessed 29<sup>th</sup> August 2013])

The removal of an architectural component seemed to bring new visitors to the space and to produce more informal ways of acting within the site. Asher's architectural displacements also produced a position from which the audience member or critic could review how the art centre functioned in its standard configuration. The students that Glicksman described would have had a sense of how this space contrasted with the art centre they ordinarily knew, or at least that which they would otherwise pass by, and if they found themselves considering the change that had brought them to the space to 'hang out', it would be to the doors and their architectural function to which their attention would have had to turn.

In the act of eliminating the partition wall that effectively compartmentalised the spaces of commerce and contemplation and thus inviting visitors to contemplate the commerce, Asher drew attention to how the architectural construction of the gallery both physically and psychologically screened the practices and spaces of artistic reception from the bureaucratic and economic back-room activities that made the former possible in a commercial gallery. In highlighting the mercantile, or business-like, nature of such institutions, he also highlighted the relationship between an artwork's value as a commodity and its status, or value, as an object of artistic appreciation. The ideological construction of the display environment from within which the artwork could be appreciated without consideration of its commodity value – or, in short, the autonomy of the gallery space – was the work's object of analysis.

### **1. Michael Asher's Claire Copley Gallery installation**

Asher not only removed the partition wall, but he also refinished the areas where the wall had connected with the side walls, ceiling and floor, in order to disguise any evidence of its removal, and to create a single, seamless, white room. The gallery faced onto a busy thoroughfare via a shop-front that featured a door as well as a large window through which, from the outside, the entire exhibition space was ordinarily visible. Throughout the period of Asher's installation, the gallery remained empty of other artworks, and because the partition wall was removed, then, anybody entering the door or looking through the window at this time could see not only the usual long gallery chamber, but also an uninterrupted view of the rear wall of the building, and, before that, the office space, normally hidden by the partition wall, where Copley herself continued to work (Fig. 23). Asher's alteration to and homogenisation of the Claire Copley Gallery into a meticulously uniform and vacant white cube environment, therefore, not only made of it a backdrop that threw everything that entered into the space into relief, placing it, effectively, on display, but also made the day-to-day running of the gallery itself into an exhibit within the space. Asher notes, 'The viewers were confronted with the way in which they had been traditionally lulled into viewing works of art and, simultaneously, the unfolding of the gallery structure and its operational

procedures.'<sup>185</sup>



Fig. 23, Michael Asher, *No Title*, installation in Claire Copley Gallery, Los Angeles, USA, 1974.

Asher's installation was not entirely architectural. Claire Copley herself, whom for the duration of the exhibition occupied the space, addressed visitors according to the artist's instructions. Asher notes, 'I left instructions with the gallery dealer to inform viewers who requested information about the work that I had produced it and that by removing the partition wall the day-to-day activities of the gallery were disclosed to the viewer in the unified office/exhibition space.'<sup>186</sup> This performative element was likely to heighten the visitors' awareness of the respective roles of audience member and gallerist, and Copley wrote to Asher during the exhibition, noting thoughts to this effect:

Really, you have created something here that is unbelievable. You have eliminated any possibility of anonymity, evasion, neutrality, or shelter, and not only for me, but for those who walk in the space, pass by the window, or in any way approach the space. The space and I have become a unit, indivisible, and it's

<sup>185</sup> Asher, in Buchloh, 1983, p. 96.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid..

amazing.<sup>187</sup>

Copley's account emphasises how the wall's removal intensified people's feelings of being on show; her realisation that she was performing as a human component in the gallery apparatus, though, is also indicative of the power of design convention in driving the behaviour and perception of visitors and performers alike. Asher's work did not, in this reading, specifically (or, at least, exclusively) address the material characteristics of the wall (that is, its inert, opaque, white surface, its rigidity and substantial structure, or how its breadth across the rear of the exhibition space), but rather, it focused on the psychological effect of the wall, or how, when present, it enabled visitors to remain willfully oblivious to the commercial aspect of the gallery's activity, and how, when absent, it enabled that aspect to be thrown into sharp relief. Asher's deliberate failure to leave visible any remnants either of the wall's former presence or of his own act of removal ensured that the office and storage area, and the activities that took place therein, were the only clear objects and actions to which the viewer's attention was likely to be drawn; visitors to the installation, then, were left simply to negotiate, howsoever they could, the newly apparent clash of economic and display functions. This, in turn, gave the work a reflexive structure, which I shall now go on to both consider and contextualize.

## 2. Language, Reflexivity and the Emergence of Institutional Critique

As I noted in Chapter One, works produced by Asher between 1963 and 1966 were fabricated off-site and then installed within the gallery; as Benjamin Buchloh argues in 'Michael Asher and the Conclusion of Modern Sculpture' (1983), these pieces were suspended 'between self-referentiality and contextual contingency'.<sup>188</sup> It is only with works such as the Asher's 1969 installation within the exhibition '18'6" x 6'9" x 11'2 1/2" x 47' x 11' 3/16" x 29' 8 1/2" x 31' 9 3/16"' at the San Francisco Art Institute that the on-

<sup>187</sup> Claire Copley, private correspondence to Michael Asher, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1974, re-printed in Kirsi Peltomäki, *Situation Aesthetics: The Work of Michael Asher* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 2010), p. 78.

<sup>188</sup> Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, in Jon Wood, Alex Potts and David Hulks, *The Modern Sculpture Reader* (Leeds: The Henry Moore Institute, 2007), pp. 356-376, p. 54.

site reconfiguration of the gallery space emerged as a significant mode of production for Asher (Fig. 25). This particular work consisted in the insertion of nine interlocking ten-foot by four-foot panels to form a thirty-six-foot partition wall that divided the gallery into a corridor space through which one travelled into a larger environment. Asher recounts, 'Two thirds of the gallery were light and airy, but had no real exit; one third was essentially a hallway, slightly darker, inviting the visitor to walk around the partition into the more open area.'<sup>189</sup> By intervening within and transforming the gallery space, this work demonstrated and analysed how partitioning can work within gallery environments to distribute the different functions of passage and reception or contemplation.

The significance of this development in Asher's practice can be assessed through comparison with a similar modular arrangement of rectilinear units installed by Donald Judd in the Leo Castelli Gallery in 1970.<sup>190</sup> Judd lined the walls of the Castelli space with rough metallic units that stood out against the smooth, clean surfaces of the gallery. (Fig. 24) Following the programme set forth in his essay 'Specific Objects' (1965), Judd's deployment of raw iron units arranged in relation to the gallery space invited reflection upon the materiality, shape and contextual placement of these units. As Barbara Rose notes in 'ABC Art' (1965), such installations assert 'presence or concrete thereness, which in turn often seems no more than a literal or emphatic assertion of their existence. [...] The thing, thus, is presumably not supposed to mean other than what it is; that is, it is not supposed to be suggestive of anything other than itself'.<sup>191</sup> Yet, as wall-based rectilinear units that rose up from the floor and stood out from the wall, Judd's iron slabs were framed by a set of display conventions that they shared with painting. This point is verified in 'Specific Objects': 'The main thing wrong with a painting is that it is a rectangular plane placed flat against a wall'.<sup>192</sup> The installation's reflexive assertion of its own materiality rested upon unacknowledged display conventions. In contrast, the Claire Copley show was concerned with display conventions and with how the material components of the gallery space projected forms of utility within it.

<sup>189</sup> Asher, in Buchloh, ed., 1983, p. 1.

<sup>190</sup> 'Don Judd', Leo Castelli Gallery and Warehouse, New York, April 11<sup>th</sup>–May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1970.

<sup>191</sup> Barbara Rose, 'ABC Art', *Art in America*, 53:5 (October–November 1965), 57-69: reprinted in Battcock, 1968, p. 216.

<sup>192</sup> Donald Judd, 1975, pp. 181-189.



Fig. 24, Donald Judd, *Untitled* (installed in Leo Castelli Gallery), galvanised iron slabs, 1970

Asher's departure from minimalism echoed a 1975 critique by two conceptual artists, Karl Beveridge and Ian Burn, who questioned the manner in which Donald Judd's practice appeared to assert that 'the identity of the art object is embodied *in* the materials'.<sup>193</sup> They go on:

Would you perhaps want to add that the identity lies also in the *arrangement* of the materials, and in the physical context of that arrangement? Or doesn't it matter? If you take identity for granted, you must also take its function for granted and presuppose the whole context of art as given. Do you?<sup>194</sup>

Judd's position is encapsulated in his assertion that 'an artwork need only be interesting', a statement that allows for the assertion of the empirical qualities of a piece's materials to qualify it as art.<sup>195</sup> Asher, in contrast, felt that the attribution *artwork* was bound up with modes of production and display, and his work, in turn, showed a critical engagement with these issues. His insertions or displacements of material units produced changes in the exhibition space that took place at the level of architectural function—a point which was missed by critics such as Carter Ratcliff, who, in an arguably inadequate oversimplification, described Asher's 'Spaces' exhibit in terms of an 'intuition of spatial volume'.<sup>196</sup> Asher's work in fact intervened within a signifying

<sup>193</sup> Karl Beveridge and Ian Burn, 'Donald Judd', *The Fox* (1975), 129-42, p. 130.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> Judd, 1975, p. 187.

<sup>196</sup> Ratcliff, 1970, p. 78.

framework that had its own set of functions—enclosing, screening, emptying, purifying, illuminating and framing—that ideologically constructed the white cube environment. Asher's interventions disarticulated this framework and invited exhibition visitors to consider how its component parts and their own expectations might be contributing to the construction of the gallery as an autonomous site of artistic reception. While practices like Judd's relied, rested or depended upon particular display conventions, Asher's sought to respond actively to, and to prompt active responses to, those same conventions.

I argue, then, that Asher's work prompted those who entered his installations to become readers of the context of display itself. He sought to bring galleries in which he worked into a (playful and critical) dynamic with the sites immediately beyond their walls—specifically, the corridors of MoMA, the road outside the Pomona College Art Centre and Copley's office. The visitor was invited to recognize and assess how both the inside and the outside of the gallery were constructed through the production of material perimeters, and to think about how and why they might expect to regard these perimeters in relation both to a particular function and to a particular expected mode of response. Such reflections might focus upon the complex relations between interpretation, behavioural response and prior experience in shaping the reflector's judgments of the space.

By inviting critical interpretations of the gallery space in this way, Asher's practice displayed a reflexive quality that was also apparent in the conceptual critiques of modernist art developed by figures such as Sol LeWitt, whose *Red Square, White Letters* (1963) treats the art object as a linguistically-determined entity (Fig. 25). This work comprises eight paintings, four of which possess flat, uniform red surfaces, and four that are finished in a similar manner in white. They are positioned on a frame shaped like a nine-square grid, with the centre square remaining empty. The centre-top square is painted red and the centre bottom square is painted white. Neither feature text. The three squares to the left and the three squares to the right each feature text that, while it appears to describe the painted support upon which it was inscribed is in fact, in many instances, considerably more complex in its reference. Whereas the phrase 'RED SQUARE' overlaying a red square seems clearly denotative, the phrase 'WHITE LETTERS' overlaying a red background is more obviously self-referential, and the



white-lettered 'RED' on a red background, which itself overlays a white square featuring the red-lettered word 'WHITE', further destabilizes the viewer's ability to locate the site of the work's meaning because the text could refer either to its respective coloured background or to the colour of the word above or below it. While legibility, or the colour-contrast between red and white, and literacy guides us to the text as a possible primary site of meaning, the conventions of painting promote the background as the significant locus. The persistence of modernist conventions of image-reading, as exemplified in abstract painting, are likely to lead us to interpret the colour (and shape) of the support as the most significant determinants of the work's meaning. (This is the reciprocity that Greenberg believed existed between the viewer's own visual sensibility and the colour-field as a product of the artist's own attention to surface, shape and colour.) LeWitt's work, though, performs a critical reading of such conventions, the text and colour disrupting the viewer's habitual way of reading the work by inviting her to question whether her experience was more significantly conditioned by visual apprehension or by linguistic comprehension.

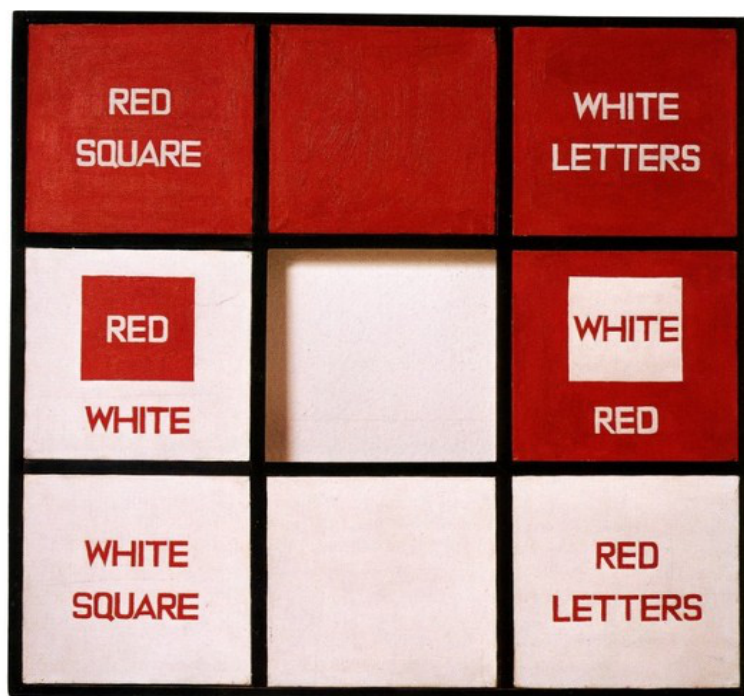


Fig. 25, Sol LeWitt, *Red Square, White Letters*, oil on canvas, 91.4 x 91.4 cm, 1963

In his examination of *Red Square, White Letters* in 'Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions' (1990), Benjamin

Buchloh identifies LeWitt's work with the suggestion that 'the viewer/reader systematically performs all of the visual and textual operations the painting's parameters allowed for [...] forcing the inherent contradictions between the two spheres into the highest possible relief'.<sup>197</sup> Conventions of naming, forms of reference and expectations of the medium become integral to the form taken by the work itself; language always already informs production and reception. Buchloh considers the focus upon language in the conceptual critique of modernism undertaken by artists such as LeWitt, Lawrence Weiner and Robert Barry to be an integral step in the shift from minimalism to institutional critique, because their work made the field of art share the same operative structure as the political and social. Buchloh says,

What begins to be put into play here, then, is a critique that operates at the level of the aesthetic 'institution'. It is a recognition that materials and procedures, surfaces and textures, locations and placement are not only sculptural or painterly matter to be dealt with in terms of a phenomenology of visual and cognitive experience or in terms of a structural analysis of the sign, [...] but that they are always already inscribed within the conventions of language and thereby within institutional power and ideological and economic investment.<sup>198</sup>

This integration of artistic production and language thus opened the way for figures like Hans Haacke, Daniel Buren and Asher himself to develop practices that were realized as interventions within structures of display, ownership and collection, and that shared a reflexive orientation with conceptualism.

In the early 1970s, questions of institutionality began increasingly to mediate discussions of artistic production and reception. Daniel Buren's 1970 text, 'The Function of the Museum' (to which I shall return later), was published by The Museum of Modern Art Oxford to accompany the artist's exhibition there in 1973;<sup>199</sup> Robert Smithson's 'Cultural Confinement' was published in 1972 in the catalogue that

---

<sup>197</sup> Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Conceptual Art 1962-1969: from the aesthetic of administration to the Critique of Institutions', *October*, 55 (Winter 1990), 105-143. Reprinted in Alberro, 2009, pp. 514-537, p. 517.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 528.

<sup>199</sup> Daniel Buren, 'The Function of the Museum', in *Daniel Buren Catalogue* (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art Oxford, 1973), pp. 57-74.

accompanied Documenta 5;<sup>200</sup> and Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* was published in 1974.<sup>201</sup> But it was, I argue, the sentiments of Mel Ramsden's 'On Practice' (1975) that most effectively captured the drive towards institutional critique in the practices of these artists in the first half of the 1970s:

[I]f I accept the problems of this society as not just something going on contingently in the background, but as my own problems, then, reflexive theory becomes (maybe) both externally (socially) aggressive, as well as individually therapeutic. [...] Insofar as oppositional activity means the gradual deconstruction of many of our own internalised assumptions, it seems that we are left at present with two choices: either accept the arbitrariness of compartmentalisation under capitalist rule, or on the other hand, live quite self-consciously in a state of uproar.<sup>202</sup>

Two installations, one by Daniel Buren and one by Hans Haacke, illustrate the varieties of reflexivity that informed institutional critique. Buren's 1973 installation *Within and Beyond the Frame* in the John Weber Gallery, New York, was a reflexive examination of the functions of the gallery as frame (Fig. 26). A typical example of Buren's interventions within art galleries and urban spaces, it involved vertically-striped pieces of fabric and paper. Buren believed that the alternating black and white vertical bands on each of his sheets neutralised one another to create a 'total absence of conflict [that] eliminates all concealment (all mythification and secrecy) and consequentially brings silence.'<sup>203</sup> In context, these 'neutral composition[s]' each adopted different

<sup>200</sup> Robert Smithson, 'Cultural Confinement', in *Documenta 5 exhibition catalogue* (Kassel: Neue Galerie and Museum Fridericianum, 1972; reprinted Flam, 1996, and in *Artforum*, 11:2 (October 1972), p. 32.

<sup>201</sup> Bürger, 1984.

<sup>202</sup> Mel Ramsden, 'On Practice', *The Fox*, 1 (1975), p. 83; reprinted in Alberro and Stimson, 2009, pp. 180-1.

<sup>203</sup> Daniel Buren, 'Beware', *Studio International*, 179:920 (March 1970), 100-104, p. 101. Having developed these ideas out of his earlier engagement with painting, Buren now understood his visual tools to operate in opposition to painting. In 2006, he said, 'From the reduction of painting to a minimum, I arrived at the idea of the visual tool, the absolute opposite of painting, which is an expression of the act of looking; no longer reduction but what can be seen in the field of vision'. Daniel Buren, 'Interview with Jerome Sans: Daniel Buren on the Subject of...', in Daniel Buren, *Intervention II, Works in Situ: Modern Art Oxford* (Oxford: Modern Art Oxford, 2006), p. 2. Buren qualified these comments in 1969, criticising the tendency in painting to give visual form to intangible aspects of reality, claiming that painting should no longer 'be the vague vision/illusion [...] of a phenomenon (nature, subconscious, geometry....)' (Daniel Buren, 'Beware', p. 100.)

identities derived from the places where they were individually hung or pasted.<sup>204</sup> They operated diagnostically as 'visual tools'<sup>205</sup> by inviting people within their vicinity to consider how their interpretations of Buren's artwork were influenced by the particular contexts occupied by the 'tools'.

At the John Weber Gallery, Buren inserted equidistantly-spaced sheets of uniformly striped fabric (matching the dimensions of the windows) between cables that ran from the rear gallery wall out across the street to the building opposite. There were nineteen sheets of fabric in total: nine within the gallery, nine hung across the street and one halfway through the window frame. Within the supposedly design-neutral John Weber Gallery, the sheets alluded to abstract paintings, and in the air outside, they appeared ornamental, like celebratory bunting. Buren's intention with the piece, as its title suggests, was to invite critical reflection upon the way one context or another, 'within and beyond' the gallery, contextualises and 'frames' its contents: 'The museum/gallery for lack of being taken into consideration is the framework, the habit [...] the inescapable "support" on which art history is "painted"'.<sup>206</sup>

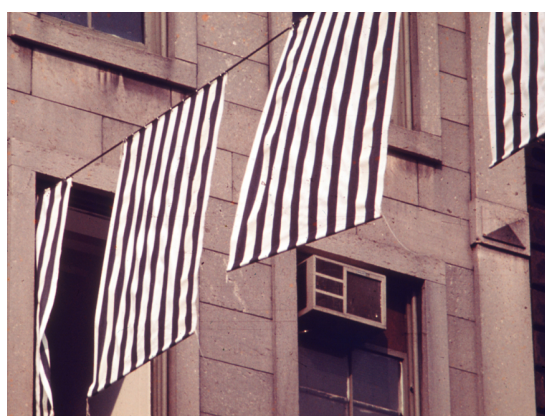


Fig. 26, Daniel Buren, *Within and Beyond the Frame*, John Weber Gallery New York, USA, 1973.

Hans Haacke, in turn, engaged with reflexivity and architectural structure by focusing upon the subdivision and interaction of environments: '[I]nformation presented at the right time and in the right place can potentially be very powerful. The working premise is to think in terms of systems: the production of systems, the interference with

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p. 862

<sup>205</sup> Buren, 2006, p. 6.

<sup>206</sup> Daniel Buren, 'Standpoints', in Daniel Buren, *Five Texts* (New York, London: Jack Wendler Gallery, 1973), p. 38.

and exposure of existing systems'.<sup>207</sup> Thinking in terms of systems, according to Haacke, offered audiences critical agency because it allowed them to grasp the interconnections between otherwise apparently distinct contexts and roles. He exemplified such a systems approach in his installation *Condensation Cube* (1963-5), in which he exhibited a cube containing a small quantity of water (Fig. 27). The work, presented for first time at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York in 1966, acted as an index of changing environmental conditions in the gallery as the water cycled through the processes of evaporation and condensation according to environmental variations caused by factors as apparently diverse as heating, lighting, air-flow, the number of audience members and the weather conditions outside. Haacke's work aimed to draw the viewer's attention and continuing focus onto these conditions and processes. It was reflexive because it presented people with the opportunity to grasp the intersection of meteorological, architectural, semiotic and behavioural systems operative both within the gallery and beyond. Like Buren's interventions, Haacke's work also remarked upon the contextualisation of the gallery within a broader (urban) space; Asher's work, though, I argue, stands apart from these due to the manner in which he invoked reflexivity through architectural disjuncture.

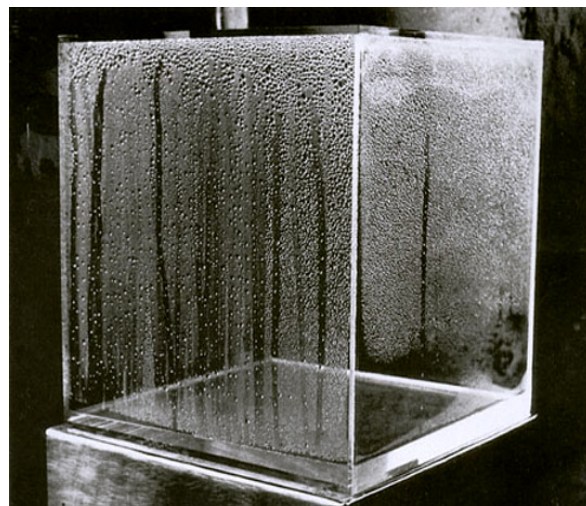


Fig. 27, Hans Haacke, *Condensation Cube*, plexiglass and water, 1963.

---

<sup>207</sup> Jeanne Siegel, 'An Interview with Hans Haacke', *Arts Magazine*, 45:7 (May 1971), p. 21.

### 3. Post-Studio Art

Each of these interventions collapsed the opposition between the site of production and display. They engaged the specific architecture and Asher's and Buren's works were fabricated within the gallery. Thus Asher's break from minimalism also negated the institution of the artist's studio, a shift whose critical consequences were captured in Daniel Buren's 1971 statement 'The Function of the Studio'. Buren notes, 'The studio [...] is the first frame, the first limit, upon which all subsequent frames/limits depend.'<sup>208</sup> Buren argues that the studio stages a selection process, allowing the artist or visiting critics/curators to decide if particular works can attain a status as objects of display beyond the studio. To facilitate this process the work must take the form of a 'portable' unit ready for recontextualisation within the gallery. Therefore, 'from the moment of its production the work must be isolated from the real world'.<sup>209</sup> It is the way in which the studio and the gallery form an institutional conduit that holds the work apart from the broader frames of social life that Buren considers establishes 'the museum and gallery as inevitable neutral frames, the unique and definitive locales of art. Eternal realms for eternal art.'<sup>210</sup>

Brian O'Doherty, in his 2007 essay, 'Studio and Cube', re-emphasises the potency of the studio walls, which like a blank canvas is 'already inseminated with a presumptive complex of implied options'.<sup>211</sup> Drawing upon Michael Peppiatt's 1982 study, *Imagination's Chamber*, O'Doherty's argument deals with the development of a mythology of the artist's studio initiated by the transference of the 'creative act [as] bourgeois fetish [...] to the fecund space of the studio'.<sup>212</sup> Finally the artist's studio becomes coded as a space of creation. 'The studio has become the artist *manqué*', setting in train the separation of the site of production, along with the site of display from other spheres of social life—a self-reflexive process, which prompts the notion of art's autonomy, which in turn transfers to the gallery.'<sup>213</sup>

<sup>208</sup> Daniel Buren, 'The Function of the Studio', trans. by Thomas Repensek, *October*, 10 (Fall 1979), pp. 51, 52.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>211</sup> O'Doherty, 2007, p. 33.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., p. 38. See also Michael Peppiatt, *Imagination's Chamber: Artists and Their Studios* (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1982).

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., pp. 13, 38.

Asher and Buren's shift to post-studio art aimed to short-circuit the abstraction of art practice within this studio/gallery loop that they believed held artworks apart from effective social critique. The term *post-studio* entered into artistic discourse through an interview with Carl Andre in which the artist claimed to be 'the first of the post-studio artists'.<sup>214</sup> John Baldessari used the term to name a new course at the California Institute of the Arts in the early 1970s, which Michael Asher took over in 1977.<sup>215</sup> Asher's marathon sessions became legendary and are considered by many to have been intended to cultivate in his students the kind of unflinching criticality that he sought in his own art practice.<sup>216</sup>

#### 4. *Aspen* 5+6

Buchloh cites the importance of the 1967 issue of *Aspen* magazine in shaping the emergent parameters of institutional critique. In order to further my analysis of white cube conventions (see Chapter One) and to set up a detailed analysis of Asher's reflexive reading of the Claire Copley Gallery, I will now examine how this unique publication was put together under the editorship of Brian O'Doherty.

O'Doherty adjusted the dimensions of the box in which *Aspen* magazine was usually sold to eight and a quarter inches square and two inches deep, producing a blank white cuboid container, which Mary Ann Walsh retrospectively describes as '[a] self-

<sup>214</sup> Carl Andre and Phyllis Tuchman, 'An interview with Carl Andre', *Artforum*, 8:6 (June 1970), 55-61, p. 55.

<sup>215</sup> Paul Brach, the first dean of Cal Arts notes, 'John Baldessari's course was called post-studio art. It stressed the emerging attitudes and forms that are now considered conceptual art.' Paul Brach, 'Cal Arts: The Early Years', *Art Journal*, 42:1, The Education of Artists, (Spring 1982), 22-29.

<sup>216</sup> Michael Baers, one of Asher's former students recounts: 'Beginning Fridays at 10:00 a.m., two students presented their work consecutively, with discussion continuing until mutual consensus deemed it time to stop. Ignoring all scheduling and durational considerations, the class sometimes lasted long into the night—an exhaustive and exhausting approach to critique.' Michael Baers, 'Michael Asher (1943–2012): Parting Words and Unfinished Work', *e-flux*, 39 (November 2012), <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/michael-asher-1943%E2%80%932012-parting-words-and-unfinished-work/>> Christopher Williams also one of Asher's former students recounts, '... part of working with Michael was his [...] relentless questions. And he seemingly had an endless supply of questions for any one student, and the duration kind of functioned in a way that kind of functioned in a way that [...] at a certain point bullshitting would be much harder. [...] I remember my last show, [...] Michael and I went into the gallery at four in the afternoon and came out at six in the morning'. Christopher Williams in interview with Fiona Conner, *Christopher Williams on Michael Asher and Post-Studio*, <https://soundcloud.com/fiona-conner/christopher-williams-on-post>, [accessed 12 July 2013].



contained, portable conceptual exhibition in a box that dispenses with the gallery.<sup>217</sup> O'Doherty himself called it his 'one-man show for that year'.<sup>218</sup> The contents—four film reels, five records, sheets of cardboard from which a sculpture could be made, printed texts on eight by eight inch sheets and booklets—allude to white cube gallery conventions by incorporating expanses of white space (the empty page and the gallery wall), framing devices and spatial dividers (text boxes, frames and grids), as well as mapped and described sequences of movement (Fig. 28). One sheet of paper, acting as the contents page, outlines the three major themes of the publication: 'Time (in art and 'history')', 'silence and reduction' and 'language'.<sup>219</sup> The issue is packed with allusions to the gallery space (through examinations of spatial demarcation within otherwise empty spaces, and reflections upon methods of ordering and framing), and the co-existence of these various documents (under O'Doherty's curation) suggest that the readings they undertake of different modes of spatial demarcation are permutations on a common language of display that informs the design and preconception of modern art galleries.



Fig. 28. *Aspen 5+6*, edited by Brian O'Doherty, 1967.

<sup>217</sup> Mary Ruth Walsh, 'A Labyrinth in a Box: *Aspen 5+6*', *Circa*, 104 (Summer, 2003), p. 42.

<sup>218</sup> Patrick Ireland, lecture, Hugh Lane Gallery, Irish Art Historians first annual lecture, 19th March 1999. Quoted in Walsh, 2003, p. 42.

<sup>219</sup> Brian O'Doherty, 'Contents Page', *Aspen 5+6*, ed. Brian O'Doherty (New York: Roaring Fork Press, Fall -Winter, 1967).

The three diagrammatic works that were included in the box—Sol LeWitt's serial subdivision of the Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles, *Serial Project 1* (1967); Mel Bochner's *Seven Translucent Tiers* (1967); and O'Doherty's own schematics of movements within a nine square grid, *Structural Play* (1967)—each explored themes of containment and regimentation and indicated the primacy of the architectural frame of the white cube space as the organising principle of the spatial field within. LeWitt's *Serial Project #1* turned the modular placement of repeated units, typical of minimalist installations, into a regimented subdivision of the cuboid space of the gallery that quantified and reduced the empty space within to a series of units. Mel Bochner's *Seven Translucent Tiers* (1967) (Fig. 29) replaced the gridded gallery with eight gridded tiers of translucent paper that had inscribed upon them sets of numbers and plus and minus signs; his grids abstracted the relations of part to whole that formed LeWitt's structural analysis of the gallery space, reducing physical space to the diagrammatic and dealing with filled and unfilled space in terms of positive and negative terms. O'Doherty's *Structural Play* (1967) introduced a performer into spatial schematics; a proxy for a gallery visitor. The work was a plan for a performance piece involving two actors on separate grids. Actors A and B take turns addressing statements and questions to one another that comprise an unresolved repetitive dialogue, and make predetermined movements throughout the grid. The first four statements repeated the question 'What do you want?' with the word stress shifting from the first word to the last, and then repeated the process with the reply 'I don't know?'. From each changing position, a different performance and reading of the context is produced. Utterance, movement, location and graphic or spatial inscription recur within these works as producers of contexts whose order always already finds its root in convention and language. Anticipating O'Doherty's later explicit critique of modernist gallery display conventions, *Inside the White Cube*, it was the white spaces in which these artists choose to work—the art gallery, and the sheet of paper—that allowed these conventions of ordering to come to the fore. As O'Doherty would later say, in the third *ArtForum* essay: within the white cube, 'context becomes content'.<sup>220</sup>

---

<sup>220</sup> O'Doherty, 1986, p. 15.

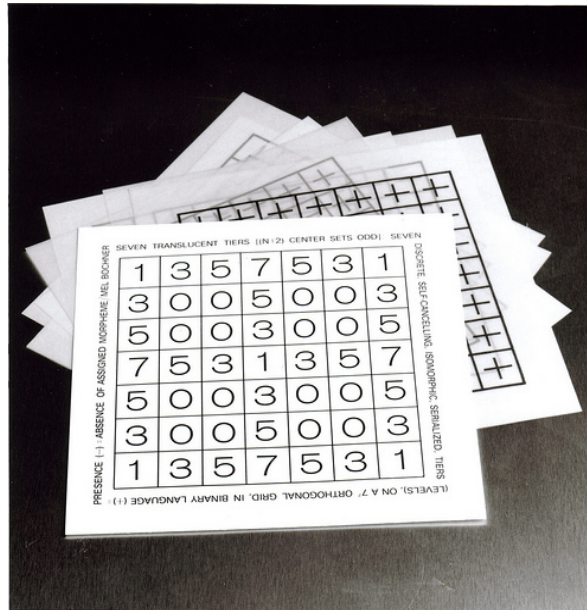


Fig. 29, Mel Bochner, *Seven Translucent Tiers* in *Aspen 5+6*, edited by Brian O'Doherty, printed paper, 1967.

The pamphlet of essays included in the box offers further insight into the socio-linguistic construction of white cube conventions that O'Doherty set forth in his *Inside the White Cube* essays. Susan Sontag's 'The Aesthetics of Silence' sets out three modalities of silence as rhetorically and contextually determined constructs that can be seen to correspond with the functions performed by different constituents of a conventional white cube gallery. 'Silence', Sontag argues, 'never ceases to imply its opposite and to demand on its presence. Just as there can't be "up" without "down" or "left" without "right," so one must acknowledge a surrounding environment of sound or language in order to recognize silence.'<sup>221</sup> The hushed ambience of the gallery space is demarcated in this way by the white wall, which opposes the intended stillness and contemplation of the interior to the activity and distractions outside. It does this by performing Sontag's first function of silence, or silence as 'plenitude': 'experiencing all the space as filled, so that ideas cannot enter—means impenetrability, opaqueness.'<sup>222</sup> In the case of the white cube, the walls encourage a silence that minimises spatial and temporal information and (thus) disruption. Secondly, Sontag describes how silence can serve as a 'metaphor for a cleansed non-interfering vision'.<sup>223</sup> The stripping of sensory stimulus from the gallery environment performs a similar cleansing function, so that the

<sup>221</sup> Susan Sontag, 'The Aesthetics of Silence', *Aspen 5+6*, section 3.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid..

<sup>223</sup> Ibid..

'plenitude of silence' becomes the explicit focus of the occupant's attention, and silence becomes a mindset. Thirdly, silence might be imposed, either by the gallery's general ambience, the staff, or the attitudes and behaviour of other visitors, who are likely to be involved in rituals of contemplation or meditation in which various gallery occupants can and might participate together without mutual agreement. In each of these situations, silence mediates the relations between people and the gallery space. Conventions of display and corresponding modes of response serve as social determinants of stillness, silence and silencing within the gallery space. Thus, I argue, analysis of these different functions leads onto a discussion of language.

Roland Barthes's 'The Death of the Author', which, in the context of *Aspen 5+6*, O'Doherty gives the role of analysing language, argues for the substitution of the author – previously conceived as the originator the meaning of her/his work – for the scriptor, 'who traces a field without origin – or at least with no origin but language itself.'<sup>224</sup> Barthes considers authorship to be a function ascribed through a speech act,

which functions perfectly without it being necessary to "fill" it with the person of the interlocutors: linguistically, the author is nothing but an orie who writes. Just as *I* is nothing but the one who says *I*: language knows a "subject," not a "person", and this subject, empty outside of the very speech-act which defines it, suffices to "hold" language, i.e. to exhaust it.<sup>225</sup>

Writing is the work of the scriptor, who 'is born *at the same time*, as his text [...]. There is no time other than that of the speech-act, and every text is eternally written here and now.'<sup>226</sup> According to Barthes, a scriptor's intentions only matter at the moment of production, and only insofar as these intentions allow her/him to select and combine words. Once finished, the text will embody 'multiple writings, proceeding from several cultures and entering into dialogue, into parody, into contestation.'<sup>227</sup> This multiplicity is configured at the moment of reading: 'the reader is the very space in which is inscribed, without any of them being lost, all the citations out of which writing is made.'<sup>228</sup> Linking

<sup>224</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *Aspen 5+6*. See also, Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).

<sup>225</sup> Ibid..

<sup>226</sup> Ibid..

<sup>227</sup> Ibid..

<sup>228</sup> Roland Barthes, *Aspen 5+6*. See also, Roland Barthes, 1977, pp. 142-8

this back to fine art, the design of white cube galleries built in America during the 1940s and 1950s was informed by previous modes of gallery designs, by modernist notions of how art is experienced and what conditions best facilitate those experiences, and by references to other types of display environment within post-war America.<sup>229</sup> The act of reading extends to the role the reader (gallerist, critic or audience member) performs within the space, as each person fulfils a unique subject position. Barthes' reference to speech-acts draws on J.L. Austin's analysis of illocutionary acts, which invest language with particular functions and force, and, most importantly in the context of the gallery space, invest the utterer with a role.<sup>230</sup> Procedures like approaching and contemplating an artwork carry an illocutionary function that binds the person performing the action to a subject position as an audience member. Acting from within these subject positions, the visitor's responses to such white cube galleries are investments, testings or challenges of these roles. Asher's reworking of architectural norms invite the latter responses.<sup>231</sup>

For Barthes, interpreting is a productive act. It creates new readings. Likewise, making an actual thing, like an art gallery, is a construct of methodologies, procedures, and theoretical grounds that each derive from prior readings. Such considerations, then, have ramifications for how we might think about the temporality of objects. With reference to the historical existence of works of art, in 'Style and Representation of Historical Time', commissioned by O'Doherty to represent time in *Aspen 5+6*, George Kubler says,

Our habit of meeting [an artwork] in a museum or on a stage or in a concert hall, where it bids for our attention with the illusion that it is a single point in space, time, and feeling, further masks the historical reality of every work of art. That

---

<sup>229</sup> Philip Goodwin's design for the Museum of Modern Art New York (1939) included ground floor display windows, following a convention of window dressing borrowed from department store design. McClellan notes, 'The building aligned with Fifty-third street, and the ground-level (show) windows gave passersby full view of the lobby replete with public amenities.' Such a design feature is also echoed in the shop front style of Claire Copley Gallery. McCellan, 2008, p. 77.

<sup>230</sup> See J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975)

<sup>231</sup> A similar approach to architectural orthodoxies can be seen in the practice of architects such as Peter Eisenmann that have been gathered under the rubric of deconstruction. Charles Jencks notes, 'Deconstruction [as architectural practice] always depends for its meaning upon on that which is previously constructed. It always posits an orthodoxy which it "subverts", a norm with which it breaks, an assumption and ideology which it undermines'. Charles Jencks, 'Deconstruction: The Pleasures of Absence', in *Deconstruction*, ed. Andreas Papadakis (London: Academy Editions, 1998), p. 120.

reality is totally different from the illusion of uniqueness.<sup>232</sup>

Kubler's commentary challenges the immediacy Greenberg and Fried attributed to high modernist art, and supports Bürger's claim that such accounts mask this mode of artistic production's historical reality, as does O'Doherty's theorisation of the silent support of the white cube gallery from which such readings issue. Kubler extends this analysis by arguing that 'every work of art is a bundle of components of different ages, intricately related to many other works of art, both old and new, by a network of incoming and outgoing influences.'<sup>233</sup> He then broadens the focus of the discussion out towards events in general, which he considers 'may be treated synchronously or diachronously, i.e., as events at rest in a cross-section of relationships or as events in duration, under unceasing change in motion and flow.'<sup>234</sup> The cross-section that Kubler describes here corresponds to the 'multiple writings' that featured in Barthes' analysis of the act of reading and demonstrates the complex of historical constituents that comprise individual encounters with works of art.<sup>235</sup> Such a complex is reflected in the organisation of *Aspen 5+6*, in which adjacent components conspire to form a structure that can be re-combined by the reader, thus forming new structural relationships.

## 5. The Allegorical Structure of Asher's Claire Copley Gallery Installation

From the examination of the function of reflexivity within practices of institutional critique and O'Doherty's structural examination of the framing, division and arrangement of empty space, I wish now to return to the environment within the Claire Copley Gallery and to consider how Asher's installation constituted an allegorical reading of the space. Copley mostly showed conceptual art within her gallery. In 1976,

---

<sup>232</sup> George Kubler, 'Style and Representation of Historical Time', *Aspen 5+6*, section 3.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid..

<sup>234</sup> Ibid..

<sup>235</sup> Barthes, *Aspen 5+6*, section 3.

for instance, she exhibited Daniel Lamelas,<sup>236</sup> Daniel Buren<sup>237</sup> and Allen Ruppersberg.<sup>238,239</sup> Yet the gallery itself had been designed in accordance with white cube conventions that came into use with the rise of high modernism. The convergence of the gallery and displays in Copley's exhibitions, then, exemplified Barthes' conception of multiple writings. The fact that white cube conventions endured here was a curatorial re-writing of their function. The gallery now served as an expedient backdrop for a conceptual critique of modernist practice. Asher's installation foregrounded this conjunction of high modernist gallery design and conceptually driven practice by displaying the gallery architecture and the gallerist's organisational activities together. Thus the display and the economic/managerial aspects of the gallery were shown to be the products of different historical developments that converged here as emergent or left over conventions. Foregrounding the different display structures operative within this gallery and the different historical moments from which they issued, the installation worked as an allegory of the site in the manner that Craig Owens describes in his essay 'The Allegorical Impulse'.<sup>240</sup>

Asher's work's allegorical structure was produced through the architectural intervention itself and changes it triggered in behavioural response. Owens identifies the structure of allegory as being additive.

The allegorist [...] does not restore an original meaning that may have been lost or obscured; allegory is not hermeneutics. Rather, he adds another meaning to the image. If he adds, however, he does so only to replace: the allegorical meaning supplants an antecedent one; it is a supplement.<sup>241</sup>

Linking white cube conventions with wider socio-economic processes, the intervention

---

<sup>236</sup> 'Daniel Lamelas: Biography', <[http://www.spruethmagers.com/artists/david\\_lamelas@@exhib/](http://www.spruethmagers.com/artists/david_lamelas@@exhib/)>, [accessed 11 August 2013].

<sup>237</sup> 'Daniel Buren: Biography', <<http://www.barbarakrakowgallery.com/daniel-buren?bio/>>, [accessed 11 August 2013].

<sup>238</sup> 'Allen Ruppersberg: Biography', <<http://www.martinjanda.at/en/artists/allen-ruppersberg/biography/>>, [accessed 11 August 2013].

<sup>239</sup> In a subsequent project with Copley and Santa Monica gallerist Morgan Thomas, Asher asked both of these institutions to move their scheduled exhibitions and gallery operations to the others premises. As a result Copley exhibited works by conceptual artists On Kawara, Daniel Buren and William Leavitt in Thomas's space. Peltomki, 2010, p. 73.

<sup>240</sup> Owens, 1980a, 1980b

<sup>241</sup> Owens, 1980a, p.69.



demonstrated that perceptions of the gallery as an autonomous site of artistic reception in fact rested on illusions that maintained the contradictions upon which the site was grounded.

The intended reception of Asher's work, in turn, rested upon the fact that two seemingly irreconcilable functions co-exist within this space. In the same way that LeWitt's *Red Square, White Letters* (1963) invited the viewer/reader to work through all of its potential and contrasting interpretations, ambiguity was Asher's installation's mode of operation, as exemplified in Sandy Ballatore's review of the show:

All of the stuff on the walls is gone, along with every bit of privacy. Actually viewers don't intend social interaction. They come to look at art. But without knowing it, they are an integral part of the work they see. How unsettling, and uncomfortable. There are no visual entertainments to cast intent gazes upon, security in the altered room which now seems so long and narrow. Are we in the right gallery? No. Yes. Shall we walk around a little and then saunter out of the door, or shall we say the hell with it and stomp on up La Cienega shaking our heads. Oh, of course, the show isn't up yet. Oh, it is!<sup>242</sup>

Ballatore captures a sense of the difficulties that ensue when a pre-determined pattern of engagement is no longer possible. The artworks that were expected appear not to have been hung, bringing the reviewer's attention back to the role these 'visual entertainments' usually perform as part of the gallery apparatus and the subject position she had expected to fulfill as their consumer. People who encountered this work actively participated in it, and even if they refused, the automatic performance roles had already been questioned. In this process a moment of critical reflection occurs in the chain described by Barthes, in which interpretations draw out and re-inscribe meanings within scenarios: a question is looped back onto the context without requiring immediate resolution within that context. It is here that Owens' additive dimension of allegory comes into play. In this process of interpretation, the ambiance of the gallery space might appear to exist in an irreconcilable tension with the gallery's socio-economic operations. The irreconcilable exhibitionary and economic/managerial dimensions of

---

<sup>242</sup> Sandy Ballatore, 'Michael Asher: Less is Enough.' *Artweek* 5:34 (October 12, 1974), p. 16.

the work (its ambiguity) sustained multiple contrasting readings. Two procedures, for example, contributed to the physical inclusion of Copley's office into the installation: the removal of the wall that hid it from view and the refinishing of the white cube space around it. It remains ambiguous, then, whether the office is presented as an integral aspect of this display scenario or as an intrusion from outside. Furthermore, it was possible to approach Asher's installation with a variety of possible expectations (issuing, ultimately, from different historical moments), which would produce a great diversity of readings. The white cube could have been interpreted, for instance, as an expedient container (conceptualism), an empty ambient space (minimalism) or a purified backdrop (modernism). The ambiguities of interpretation that Asher's intervention set up unraveled these histories of use and allowed the white walls that surrounded Copley's desk to oscillate between the multiple modes of employment they had and have performed. Like the ambiguities of reading at the heart of LeWitt's *Red Square, White Letters*, Asher's conflation of functions indicates that no necessary relation was discernible between the site's material structure and the uses to which it was put. Any functions that were possible, therefore, became permissible.

This handling of the Copley site is entirely in keeping with Owens' thesis on allegory. Owens identifies the impulse towards allegory in postmodern art with Smithson's claim that 'in the illusory babels of language, an artist might advance in order to get lost.'<sup>243</sup> By breaking open the function and subdivisions of the Copley space, Asher invited the possibility of re-tracing the pattern of appropriations through which current uses of the space were arrived at; a process that must travel beyond the Copley space to the further multiple contexts where repetitions of use allowed this particular gallery to operate through the solidity of convention. Citing Walter Benjamin, Owens notes in his essay on Smithson, 'Earthwords':

In allegory, language is broken up, dispersed, in order to acquire a new and intensified meaning in its fragmentation. But if [as Benjamin says,] allegory 'opens up a gulf in the solid massif of verbal meaning and forces the gaze into the depths of language,' it is because it is in essence a form of *writing*; allegory 'at one stroke [...] transforms things and works into stirring writing', and

<sup>243</sup> Robert Smithson 'A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art', in Flam, 1996, p 78. Quoted in Owens, 1980b, p. 60.

conversely, writing into an object: in allegory 'the written word also tends towards the visual'.<sup>244</sup>

Owens' commentary demonstrates language's material roots, and how any one site of meaning should be considered a construction made through the projection of other writings into its material configuration. Copley's gallery is one such site, and Asher's allegorical reading of the space asks from whence comes the significance that this space registers in the behaviour of visitors. To address this question is to explore a pattern of use.

Owens also notes that interpretive acts themselves tend towards allegory, insofar as they deal with the plurality of meanings present within their object. He gives the example of Laurie Anderson's appropriation of an image of a nude man and woman that was painted on the *Apollo 10* spacecraft that she then projected as part of her performance, *Americans on the Move* (1979).<sup>245</sup> Owens imagines that an alien reading this image might interpret the man waving as 'simply a picture' or that his gesture might signify 'greeting and farewell', 'Halt!' or a representation of a taking of an oath.<sup>246</sup>

With regard to Asher's installation, a similar array of contrasting responses was also possible. Firstly, visitors might wonder whether they had entered an art gallery or an office. Following on from this, they might consider whether they were intruders within Copley's work-space or guests invited to regard her as part of the display. Were they in a space of introspection or interaction? Had they become participants within a public performance or was this still a space of private contemplation in which Copley and her desk was an exhibit? Finally, was the office furniture an intrusion within a purified modernist gallery, was it a prop in a minimalist environment, or did it critically unveil the gallery as a socio-economic apparatus? These ambiguities were expressed in Ballatore's concerns over whether or not she was standing within the finished exhibition. Melinda Wortz's *Art News* review highlighted the difficulties of confronting Copley in the space, but also indicated that her unease was the product of an unwillingness to break from her own expectations of viewership within the space: 'Standing directly in front of Copley it is almost impossible not to confront her and ask

<sup>244</sup> Craig Owens, 'Earthwords', *October*, 10 (Autumn, 1979), p. 124.

<sup>245</sup> *Americans on the Move* was first performed at the New Music/New York festival June 8-16 1979.

<sup>246</sup> Owens, 1980b, p. 60.

the inevitably embarrassing questions about the show. The viewer does not have the option of anonymously viewing the exhibition and leaving, nor can Copley feign ignorance at your presence.<sup>247</sup> Wortz felt that she, the gallery visitor, should be doing something inherently private, but was being made to perform publicly. Copley, in contrast, considered that she was part of the exhibition and each day was actively contributing to the realisation of the work: 'I began to recognise that more than being a contending element in the conception/construction of the piece, I also am an element in the working of it, and in the realisation.'<sup>248</sup> From either side of the desk, Copley and Wortz's responses indicate the contrasting outlooks on the gallery space. Wortz felt the work was denying her a spectatorial role and felt alienated, whilst Copley appreciated how her role as gallerist brought her into coordination with the material constituents of the work.

The sense of ambiguity, and even confusion, that pervades these reports expresses the interpretative problematic produced by Asher's playful subversion of the conventional triadic relations between viewer, work and site as the structuring principles of engagement. A range of possible modes of response emerge, from the impasse that Wortz felt herself to have reached, to Copley's productive renegotiation of her own role as gallerist in relation to the site. Both of these polarities were equally productive because they moved outside of habitual patterns of use and placed the ideological construction of the gallery space in question. This reading is consistent with the artist's stated intentions:

Works had been perceived from a safe cultural distance which generally prevented the viewer from questioning the issues involved. Without that questioning, a work of art could remain enclosed in its abstracted aesthetic context, creating a situation where the viewer could mystify its actual historical meaning. As a commentary this work laid bare the contradictions inherent within the gallery structure, and its constituent elements.<sup>249</sup>

---

<sup>247</sup> Melinda Wortz, 'Looking Inward', *Art News* 73:10 (December 1974), p. 61.

<sup>248</sup> Claire Copley in private correspondence to Michael Asher, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1974, re-printed in Peltomaki, 2010, p. 79.

<sup>249</sup> Asher in Buchloh, ed., 1983, p. 96.

These 'issues', their 'mystification' and the 'questioning' that Asher sought to initiate,<sup>250</sup> correlate with the procedure of 'syntagmatic disjunction for one of diegetic combination' that Owens identifies with allegory.<sup>251</sup> Asher's work disarticulates the standard components of the gallery apparatus (viewer, work and site) in order to induce a 'paradigmatic reading of correspondences upon a horizontal or syntagmatic chain of events'.<sup>252</sup> The process of mystification to which Asher refers rested in the perpetual reconstruction of a particular paradigmatic reading of the gallery walls as a buffer against the outside world that enabled displays to remain in a false state of autonomy, ad-infinitum. In terms of individual encounters, this meant the replaying and re-entrenchment of the stable identities of site, work and viewer—an opportunity that Wortz felt was denied her within Asher's installation. Asher's work set these identities into play, initiating a hermeneutic procedure whereby each of these components could be re-thought in relation to the others and be comprehended as malleable, inter-articulated characteristics of the gallery apparatus. Thus the work facilitated diverse re-readings of the gallery space that were manifested as a range of different behavioural interactions. Wortz made a paradigmatic reading of the site, re-inscribing an identity onto the gallery as a support for instantaneous experiences of art. Such repeated patterns of encounter layer onto norms of engagement, suppressing interpretations that might include variant chains of syntagmatic combination, and ensuring that behaviour patterns remain repetitive. The actors in O'Doherty's *Structural Play* (1967) demonstrate this point: patterns of repeated utterance keep reasserting established paradigmatic designations, but the parameters of articulation inevitably change. In architectural terms, any convention of gallery design must be adjusted to specific project demands, yielding a diverse range of gallery designs, or additions to the syntagmatic chain that either sustain existing conventions or force their renegotiation. (Examples that I will consider in Chapter Three are the rise of the alternative space in the 1970s and the large scale museum expansions of the 1990s). Allegorical reading is the procedure that both secures and can also undermine the gallery space's continuity of identity.

Through allegorical reading, chains or layerings of identity develop. Owens

---

<sup>250</sup> Ibid..

<sup>251</sup> Owens, 1980a, p. 52.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid..

claims this process to be 'not dynamic but static, ritualistic repetitive.'<sup>253</sup> Layerings of perceptual fragments, for example, shape readings of minimalist art. We seek out an overview that we can call the encounter, but this attempted paradigmatic reading is quickly subsumed back within a syntagmatic chain without conclusion. This was precisely Michael Fried's critique. Yet, I argue, and as Asher's interventions demonstrate, the unacknowledged support of such experiences is the gallery space, which can appear to shield minimalist installations against the intrusion of the socio-linguistic forms of reading discussed by Barthes. Yet if we could apply the image of endlessly circulating within installations of minimalist art that Fried evokes so well to the endless chain of renegotiated meanings through which the gallery space (or indeed any dimension of the institution of art) is continuously re-negotiated, we might have constructed a diagram of the kinds of allegorical reading that Asher's installations invite.<sup>254</sup>

## 6. Literal and Figural/Rhetorical Meaning

In order to substantiate his thesis on allegory, Owens made extensive reference to Paul de Man's theorisation of the act of reading. Owens states, 'De Man recognises allegory as a structural interference of two distinct levels or uses of language, the literal and rhetorical (metaphoric), one which denies precisely what the other one affirms.'<sup>255</sup> Thus de Man considers that the act of reading allegorises the text by drawing out the different and mutually exclusive meanings that inhere within it. In 1979 de Man published a body of essays, the title of which, *Allegories of Reading*, alludes to this process, and Owens draws upon examples from the first essay, 'Semiology and Rhetoric', in order to support

---

<sup>253</sup> Ibid..

<sup>254</sup> Fried also cites the sculptor Tony Smith's description of the affective onrush of the then unfinished New Jersey Turnpike that he had gained access to and was driving down. Driving uninvited, without destination, on an unfinished road and isolated by surrounding darkness, Smith was able to imagine that his experience escaped social determination, describing the experience as 'something mapped out but not socially recognised.' (Tony Smith, quoted in Michael Fried, 1998, p. 158.) However, like the role the gallery plays in enabling people to focus on spatial and physical determinations of minimalist art, these mental and physical buffers framed and were continually re-inscribed into the encounter, in such a way as to let its sensory components come to the fore.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid..

his own theorisation of allegory in the context of art practice.<sup>256</sup> De Man's essays work with specific texts to show how literal and figural meaning co-exist as interpretative possibilities within them and form the basis of their capacity to be meaningful. However, as both are simultaneously present in texts, both serve to complicate the relationship between these two levels of interpretation. Attention to pure grammatical meanings inhibits rhetorical or metaphorical configurations, whilst grammatical meanings themselves depend upon rhetorical structures. Both interfere with and allegorise the other's capacity to serve as the meanings of signs. One can always be read into the other as a contradictory interpretation.<sup>257</sup> Here, similarities abound with Owens' notion of the palimpsest (which I examined in Chapter One), whereby one text serves as a means through which another can be interpreted. In 'Semiology and Rhetoric', de Man clearly defines the opposition that he draws between literal (grammatical) and figural (rhetorical) levels of meaning through the example of the rhetorical question:

... asked by his wife whether he wants his bowling shoes laced over or laced under Archie Bunker answers with a question: "What's the difference?" Being a reader of sublime simplicity, his wife replies patiently explaining the difference between lacing over and lacing under, whatever this may be, but provokes only ire. "What's the difference" did not ask for the difference but means instead "I don't give a damn what the difference is."<sup>258</sup>

Within the same utterance two distinct meanings are co-present that are mutually exclusive and directly oppose one another. De Man generalises this problematic to consider the ambiguities inherent in modes of questioning:

Confronted with the question of the difference between grammar and rhetoric, grammar allows us to ask the question, but the sentence by which we ask may deny the very possibility of asking. For what is the use of asking, I ask, when we cannot authoritatively decide whether a question asks or doesn't ask?<sup>259</sup>

---

<sup>256</sup> Paul de Man, 'Semiology and Rhetoric', in *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 3-19

<sup>257</sup> See, for instance, 'Reading Proust' (pp. 57-78) and 'Allegory of Reading (Profession de Foi)' (pp. 221-245), both in de Man, 1979.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., p.10.



Owens draws upon another example from this essay in order to substantiate the allegorising tendency inherent within practices such as Asher's. De Man addresses Yeats' poem 'Among School Children', which famously closes with the line 'How can we know the dancer from the dance?'<sup>260</sup> De Man notes that this line is 'usually interpreted, with the increased emphasis of a rhetorical device, [as indicating] the potential unity between form and experience'.<sup>261</sup> In spite of his belief that majority opinion holds to this position, de Man argues that,

It is equally possible, however, to read the last line literally rather than figuratively, as asking with some urgency [...] *not* that sign and referent are so exquisitely fitted to each other that all difference between them is at times blotted out but, rather, since the two essentially different elements, sign and meaning are so intricately intertwined in the imagined 'presence' that the poem addresses, how can we possibly make distinctions that would shelter us from the error of identifying what cannot be identified?<sup>262</sup>

The co-existence of literal and figural meanings that de Man identifies here is relevant to the theorisation and critique of high modernism, minimalism and critical installation practices such as Asher's. Though Owens doesn't refer directly to high modernism, examining instead the structure of the symbol in modernist aesthetic theories such as Croce's, the 'rhetorical' reading of Yeats' closing line plays an important role in understanding the way Greenberg and Fried theorise high modernism.<sup>263</sup>

---

<sup>260</sup> Ibid..

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid..

<sup>263</sup> In Croce's formulation, aesthetic intuition is the apprehension of the unique qualities of an object without subjecting it to a conceptual schema. It concerns the sensuous presentation of the object and the feelings it evokes in the perceiver. 'Imaginative expression' is the way that we articulate these feelings. An example of such a process is Matisse's contention that there was a direct correlation in his production process between feeling and expression. Thus whilst making a painting the artist claimed that he was '[...] unable to distinguish between the feeling that I have for life and my way of expressing it....The whole arrangement of my picture is expressive. The place occupied by figures or objects, the empty space around them, the proportions, everything plays a part'. Henri Matisse, 'Notes of a Painter', in Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book for Artists and Critics* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), p. 132.). Such a direct correlation between issues like choices of colour and pictorial arrangement, and the sensations felt by the artist, corresponds to the direct relation of dependency between signifier (artwork) and signified (the experience it conveys) that Owens identifies

Both Fried and Greenberg contended that the artist's handling of depicted shape was pivotal in generating a confluence of optical pictorial qualities with the viewer's own visual sensibility. Such an orientation is evident in Michael Fried's remark in his 1965 article 'Three American Painters' that Frank Stella's use of metallic paint 'has the effect of dissolving one's awareness of the picture surface as a tactile entity in a more purely visual mode of apprehension.'<sup>264</sup> As we saw in Chapter One, in the closing line of 'Art and Objecthood' Fried describes such encounters in terms of 'presentness'.<sup>265</sup> In *The Optical Unconscious*, Rosalind E. Krauss describes presentness as a 'heightened viscosity, one in which the eye and its object made contact with such amazing rapidity that neither one seemed any longer attached to its merely carnal support.'<sup>266</sup> The parameters of the visual encounter—seer and seen object—collapse into a projected image that unveils the purified optical quality of the beholder's visual sensibility. For Fried, presence describes the structure of encounters with minimalism. He contrasts the condition of literalism, whereby shape functions as a 'given property of objects', with high modernist works that 'defeat or suspend [their] own objecthood through the medium of shape.'<sup>267</sup> In summary, then, Fried identifies presence with a literal handling of shape as a projection of objecthood, and presentness with the suspension of objecthood through depicted shape.

Literal and depicted shape are the parameters of the debate between high modernist and minimalist critics, and in critical re-appraisals they have been married with de Man's opposition of literal and rhetorical (figural) meaning. Alex Potts suggests that Fried's defence of high modernism belies concerns that its principles and practices had in fact received a literal handling by minimalist practitioners, who 'seemed to have taken the reduction of form to the point of visual, conceptual and expressive nullity'.<sup>268</sup> Frank Stella's practice is a significant touchstone in these conversations (Fig. 30). Potts

---

with the term *symbol*. Before the finished work, and through the same expressive procedure that shaped the artist's productive action, others might mentally recreate the levels of feeling initially felt by the artist. In Croce's terms 'to intuit, is to express'. (Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic: As science of expression and general linguistic*, translated by Douglas Ainslie (New York: Noonday, 1922), p. 11.) On this reading the dancer (intuition) and the dance (art object) that feature in the final line of Yeats' poem cannot be separated, and hence function rhetorically (metaphorically).

<sup>264</sup> Michael Fried, 1998, p. 256.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>266</sup> Krauss, 1993, p. 7.

<sup>267</sup> Fried, 1998, p. 151.

<sup>268</sup> Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000), p. 179.

references Philip Leider's catalogue essay for Frank Stella's 1970 retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 'Literalism and Abstraction: Frank Stella's Retrospective at the Modern', and a lecture given by Fred Orton at Camberwell College of Arts in 1987 on Frank Stella.<sup>269</sup> Both texts emphasise ambiguity as a characteristic of Stella's work, because it is capable of sustaining both literal and figural readings. Orton comments,

Fried theorised modernist painting and sculpture as art that departed from the literal order to reveal what was most proper to the sense of art, a proper sense that is closed to the literal order of language. The distinction between literalism and formalism, then, rests on a distinction between the ordinary and poetic use of language, between the literal and figural.<sup>270</sup>

Donald Judd, though, also uses Stella's striped paintings as a key case study in *Specific Objects*. Where Fried saw highly resolved deductive composition that allowed these works to 'hold as [depicted] shape',<sup>271</sup> Judd saw that the correspondence of the edge and interior pattern made the paintings work as units; he compared them to 'slabs'.<sup>272</sup> Judd's reading was backed up by Carl Andre's assertion that 'Frank Stella's painting is not symbolic'.<sup>273</sup>



Fig. 30, Frank Stella, installation view, Leo Castelli Gallery, 1964.

<sup>269</sup> Philip Leider, 'Literalism and Abstraction: Frank Stella's Retrospective at the Modern', *Artforum*, 8:8 (April 1970), 44-51, and Fred Orton, *Appearing Literal* (London: Camberwell College of Art, 1987). Both these sources are referred to by Potts, 2000, p. 395.

<sup>270</sup> Orton, 1987.

<sup>271</sup> Michael Fried, 1998, p. 151.

<sup>272</sup> Bruce Glaser, 'Questions to Stella and Judd', *ARTnews*, ed. Lucy R. Lippard (September 1966).

<sup>273</sup> Carl Andre, 'Preface to Stripe Painting', in Miller, Dorothy C., ed., *Sixteen Americans* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1959), p. 76.

Discussions of allegory in the context of installation practice build upon this well rehearsed lineage of critical analysis. Yet, as we have seen from Asher's critique of minimalism, to simply differentiate between literal and figural levels of meaning is insufficient. If we remember Burn's and Beveridge's critique of Judd's practice, the gallery space is the unacknowledged rhetorical support of literalism. This point is asserted by Brian O'Doherty in *Inside the White Cube*:

Initially the picture plane is an idealised transforming space. The transformation of objects is contextual, a matter of relocation. Proximity to the picture plane assists this transformation. When isolated the context of objects is the gallery. Eventually, the gallery itself becomes, like the picture plane, a transforming force.<sup>274</sup>

The gallery walls read, on the one hand, figuratively, and in relation to displays of modernist art, as purified, and, on the other hand, literally, in support of three-dimensional works, as empty. The critical reflexivity of Asher's installations lies in how they draw attention to the illusions that permeate these enclosures—the figural readings that come to serve as norms of engagement. I refer here, precisely, to the themes of silence that Sontag discusses in *Aspen 5+6: silence as plenitude* (the filling of the space, so that ideas cannot enter), *silence as mindset*, (a corresponding cleansing of the mind), and *imposed silence* (the norm of silent engagement that can permeate art galleries). By engaging with the rhetorical construction of the gallery space through these silencing procedures, Asher engages with the social production of architectural significations of emptiness and/or purity, bringing Barthes' analysis of language and Kubler's analysis of history back into play. As Barthes notes, 'the reader is the very space in which is inscribed, without any of them being lost, all the citations out of which writing is made.'<sup>275</sup> The multiplicity of these writings registered in the different readings of the installation by commentators. Thus, the reflexive operation wrought by Asher upon specific white cube spaces takes the character of a palimpsestic reading, whereby rhetorical constructions of the gallery space are interpreted as components of the institutional structure of the site, which, as these diverse reading attest, always remains

<sup>274</sup> O'Doherty, 1986, p. 45.

<sup>275</sup> Barthes, 1977, p. 148.

open to interpretation.

## 7. Re-addressing the Medium

From the perspective of these readings of high modernist and minimalist works and Asher's own critical interventions in relation to de Man's opposition of literal and rhetorical meaning, these developments in art practice in the 1960s and 1970s appear less as a rupture with medium specificity and appear more like changing priorities within a socio-linguistic framework. Fried's reading of Stella's practice prioritizes the pictorial and suppresses materiality; a position that is inverted in Judd's reading. Critical readings of Judd, made theoretically by Burn and Beveridge, and in practice by Asher, draw emphasis to a second support, which is the illusory framework of the gallery space. We have arrived again at Greimas's 'square of opposition', with Fried's reading of depicted shape occupying an increasingly unstable position that is only sustained by overcoming objecthood—which minimalism, occupying the neuter axis, exemplifies.<sup>276</sup> Asher's practice and the conceptualist critiques of minimalism bring emphasis to contextual determinants: the socio-linguistic (rhetorical) determinations of the gallery space, or its axioms. These axioms can also be understood in terms of the paradigmatic readings through which the identity/identities of the gallery space are (provisionally) fixed against a potentially endless proliferating chain of interpretations.

Asher's intervention within the Claire Copley Gallery shows that the paradigmatic reading of white cube conventions that informed its design rested largely upon the suppression of the economic functions performed by the institution in the service of constructing what appeared as an autonomous environment of artistic reception. The negative or critical reading that Asher's intervention invites draws critical attention to the ideological construction of these axioms of the gallery space,<sup>277</sup> or, in O'Doherty's words, the 'ideology of the gallery space'.<sup>278</sup> When repeated in the minds of visitors to the space, the reading of white cube conventions that informed the original design is re-affirmed and entrenched. Architectural divisions and visitors' own mental

<sup>276</sup> Greimas and Rastier, 1968, pp. 86-105.

<sup>277</sup> Krauss, 1979, p. 37.

<sup>278</sup> O'Doherty, 1986.

projections work in tandem to contribute to the maintenance of the status of the white cube gallery. Wortz's comment, that '[t]he viewer does not have the option of anonymously viewing the exhibition and leaving', exemplifies such a re-inscription of a particular modernist reading of the gallery space, at least in the reviewer's own mindset.<sup>279</sup> Wortz assumes a specific identity as a viewer, whose act of 'viewing' is sequentially juxtaposed with the act of 'leaving', suggesting the encounter has come to an end and closure or finality has been reached. Wortz's frustration is caused by the intrusion of ongoing business and management activities into the encounter, which denies it a point that she could understand as a conclusion. Her engagement with Asher's installation seems shaped by an expectation that artistic displays ought to offer instantaneous appreciation, giving the encounter a sense of finality.

## 8. Aesthetic Use-Value

The inclusion of the office space within the gallery foregrounded another form of rhetorical meaning at work within the gallery: mainly, the ascription of economic value to objects of artistic display. An often re-printed documentary image looking into the installation, shot by the photographer Gary Kruger, shows blank side-walls where we might expect to find paintings hanging, and a stack of paintings leaning at the rear of the gallery against the left hand wall (Fig. 31). Asher claimed that, stacked up in the office like that, these paintings appeared as commodities, and he believed that, within this institutional framework, commodity was their primary value. He notes, '[As] the gallery dealer must give the work an economic value, the dealer is often unable to reveal the work's actual function. Paradoxically the reality of the work can be viewed only through this conduit in which it undergoes the initial abstraction in the accrual of exchange value.'<sup>280</sup> Asher's installation demonstrated how artefacts gained a public existence through their entrance into the art market by virtue of being handled by galleries such as Claire Copley's. In order to foreground the display function of the site, though, the architecture of the gallery needed to be designed to suppress the economic dimension of

---

<sup>279</sup> Wortz, 1974, p. 61.

<sup>280</sup> Asher, in Buchloh, ed., 1983, p. 96.

the works and the procedures through which they were traded. A primary requirement for the gallery, then, was the creation and maintenance of conditions under which displays could read as functionless objects of artistic display. Asher's removal of spatial partitioning brought modes of artistic reception into a direct encounter with the goal-oriented outlook of the business world.



Fig. 31, Michael Asher, *No Title*, Installation in Claire Copley Gallery, (detail view), Los Angeles, USA, 1974.

The paintings stacked at the side of Copley's office, however, cannot be seen to have returned to a more fundamental economic state. Their status as commodities is framed by the desk, the phone and the two seats facing one another, all of which suggest the bureaucracy of each painting's economic processing. The installation dramatizes the market upon which the exchange value of artworks is calculated. According to Marx's theory of fetishism, as soon a commodity 'transcends [its] sensuousness' and becomes an object of exchange, its value is determined as part of an aggregate of all the labour of private individuals within society.<sup>281</sup> Marx says, 'The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men's own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves.'<sup>282</sup> The commodity appears through its economic value, not through its immediate usefulness. While its fetishisation is illusory, it is also inescapable. This process is reflected in Asher's own commentary on his Claire Copley installation: '[T]he

<sup>281</sup> Marx, 1976, p. 163.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., pp. 164-165.

dealer's prime function is to commodify the work of art to transform the work's aesthetic use-value into exchange value'.<sup>283</sup> The dealer produces the economic value of artworks by promoting their value as artistic displays. By the time a museum-goer experiences the immediate qualities of the work in the gallery, its social existence has already been defined as an exchange value.

Once it is processed through a dealership, then, the use-value of an art-work is subsumed into a framework of exchange. If aesthetic use-value is to be preserved, it must be produced in critical relation to the contexts in which that exchange value is imposed upon it. Benjamin Buchloh closes his essay 'Moments of History in the Work of Dan Graham' (1978) with just such a claim: 'Use-value is art's most heterogeneous counterpart, which, defining the artistic activity as organon of history, as instrument of materialist recognition and transformation, determines itself primarily and finally by its historical context.'<sup>284</sup> Asher's interventionist practice has, at this point, developed into a critique of how artistic production and reception has become absorbed into processes of economic exchange. Buchloh makes a similar point in his essay 'Michael Asher and the Conclusion of Modern Sculpture' (1983), in which he claims that Asher's installation practice developed in this negative manner because of the encroachment of the commodity form and the fetishisation of material relations into all sectors of late twentieth century society. That is, the commodification of art led Asher to develop his work as a critique of the apparatus of display itself. According to Buchloh, Asher's works

[...] operate with increasing analytical precision on the threshold between symbolic space and actual space, continuously increasing the ambiguity between functional object and aesthetic object, as though to prove from within an analysis of sculpture itself that it has lost its material and historical legitimacy.<sup>285</sup>

Buchloh's use of the term *functional* seems to suggest Asher's practice is returning the art object to a form of utility; I believe, though, that Buchloh is here referring to the manner in which the installations served as a tool for critique. This point is clarified by

<sup>283</sup> Asher, in Buchloh, ed., 1983, p. 96.

<sup>284</sup> Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Moments of History in the work of Dan Graham', in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry* (Cambridge (Massachusetts): M.I.T. Press, 2003), p. 198.

<sup>285</sup> Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 1981, pp. 55-64.



Gail Day in her examination of Buchloh's writing:

The functionality to which [Buchloh] repeatedly returns does not simply refer to art's usability as an object in the narrowly literal sense [...]. Its use as an object for aesthetic engagement is understood not as aesthetic enjoyment but rather as a model of social critique.<sup>286</sup>

As we have seen, Asher's allegorical reading of the Claire Copley Gallery foregrounded the rhetorical construction of the display environment and the obfuscation of its economic function behind a screening wall; thus, the aesthetic use-value of Asher's installation lay in its critique of the co-existence of the autonomous gallery space and the economic fetishisation of display objects within private gallery spaces such as Copley's.

## **9. The Institution of the Public Art Museum, University Art Centre and Commercial Art Gallery**

I wish to close this chapter by building upon the discussion of institutionality broached at the beginning of Chapter One in order to consider the similarities and differences between the public and private gallery spaces that housed the Michael Asher installations I have discussed.

As we saw in Chapter One, with the discussions initiated by bodies like the Art Workers' Coalition and Guerilla Art Action Group, the function of public art museums was hotly contested at the close of the 1960s. Contributing to these debates in his 1970 essay, 'The Function of the Museum', Daniel Buren described the institution of the art museum/gallery as possessing a threefold function, which, in varying capacities, was performed by the three institutions into which Asher intervened:

1. Aesthetic. The museum is the frame and effective support upon which the work is inscribed/composed. It is at once the center in which the action takes

---

<sup>286</sup> Gail Day, *Dialectical Passions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 189.

place and the single (topographical and cultural) viewpoint for the work.

2. Economic. The museum gives a sales value to what it exhibits, has privileged/selected. By preserving or extracting it from the common place, the museum promotes the work socially, thereby ensuring its exposure and consumption.

3. Mystical. The Museum/Gallery instantly promotes to “Art” status whatever it exhibits with conviction, i.e. habit, thus diverting in advance any attempt to question the foundations of art without taking into consideration the place from which the question is put. The museum (the gallery) constitutes the mystical body of art.<sup>287</sup>

Asher's 'Spaces' installation questioned the mystical function of the Museum of Modern Art New York by demonstrating the gallery's capacity to frame even a displacement of its architectural structure as art. The work can also be seen to possess the aesthetic function seen in the way in which it questioned the function of the gallery space and its curatorial norms. Interestingly, though, this critique was commissioned by the museum itself and gained public articulation through a high degree of institutional support. Indeed, the critical readings of institutional space that Asher invited do not contradict the way the then-director of MoMA, William Rubin, framed the museum's function in terms of a kind of pedagogy:

Modern art education during or just after World War II was, in the first instance, very much a question of this museum and its publications. [...] I find my own views about the collection and about the exhibiting of it are very much like Alfred's. [Alfred H. Barr Jr, first director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York] That's partly because I was brought up on Alfred's museum and on the collection as he built it.<sup>288</sup>

---

<sup>287</sup> Daniel Buren, 'The Function of the Museum,' in A.A. Bronson and Peggy Gale, eds., *Museums by Artists* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), pp. 57-74.

<sup>288</sup> Lawrence Alloway, 'Talking with William Rubin: Like folding out a hand of cards', *Artforum* (November 1974), p. 47.

Though Asher's installation performed a critique of the kind of high modernist sensibility that Rubin here demonstrates, the artist's intention to expose the ideological constraints upon interpretation could further public understanding about how display environments in modern art galleries function. Viewed in this way, I argue that such critical projects could be seen to be part of the broader mission of such public art museums that includes both supporting public engagement and academic research and addressing the needs of trustees and campaign groups such as the Art Workers' Coalition. Public art museums are, in the words of Carol Duncan, 'mediating institutions'.<sup>289</sup>

Asher's installation in the Gladys K. Montgomery Art Centre (1970) intervened within the institutional structure of Pomona College's on-campus art gallery. Rebecca McGraw, now senior curator of Pomona College Museum of Art, notes the links between the gallery and the academic activities of the college:

'It was in the 1930s that the gallery [...] began to serve as the primary visual art facility of Pomona College. Originally established as part of the art department, its programming was developed by a series of prominent scholars who served as chair to the art department and as director of the gallery.'<sup>290</sup>

Thus the intention at Pomona was, from the early development of the art centre, to link scholarship in the art department with the development of exhibition programmes in the gallery. This led the centre's director, Hal Glicksman, to pursue emerging trends in installation and performance art. In the year of Asher's exhibition, the gallery also presented the environmental work of Robert Irwin and Tom Eatherton and the performance work of Judy Chicago.<sup>291</sup> McGraw notes that during this period 'the museum presented a number of ground-breaking installation and performance art work that reflected a confluence of art faculty, curators, visiting artists, and students'.<sup>292</sup> The success of the art centre at Pomona College during this period was remarkable, yet the strategy of presenting temporary exhibitions of emerging modes of practice was,

<sup>289</sup> Carol Duncan, *Civilising Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 103.

<sup>290</sup> Rebecca Graw, 'It Happened at Pomona: Introduction', <http://www.pomona.edu/museum/exhibitions/2011/it-happended-at-pomona/full-introduction.pdf/>, [accessed 28 June 2013].

<sup>291</sup> Ibid..

<sup>292</sup> Ibid..

according to John R. Spencer, typical of the strategies employed by University art museums. 'All university museums desire to emulate the large civic museums to some degree. [...] They know that they are poor cousins who cannot compete in acquisition, so they buy equivalents or attempt to anticipate trends in taste by buying against the market.'<sup>293</sup> Serving as a symbol of culture on campus, the Gladys K. Montgomery Art Centre offered an aestheticised environment for the exhibition of departmental art research and institutional ratification for emerging forms of practice through a cycle of temporary exhibits.

In private galleries such as Claire Copley's, in contrast, the presentation and sale of works was an integral aspect of the institution. Copley's commitments rested with the collectors who made her business viable, and artworks were the commodities in which she traded. This commercial orientation afforded Copley freedom, allowing her to situate her venture in relation to the emergence of conceptualism in the late 1960s. As I have shown, Copley was critically invested in and enthusiastic about practices such as Asher's, which brought an air of seriousness and prestige to the gallery, and, despite his work being very difficult to market, Asher's engagement with private galleries at this time brought a sales value to his work. I will develop this idea further in Chapter Three.

Thus, in different ways, public and private galleries and museums fulfill the functions that Buren list: they perform ideologically by aestheticising displays within apparently functionless environments, by publicly promoting the artistic and economic value of works, and by facilitating the public reception of artworks.

In this chapter I have shown how Michael Asher's interventions within different institutional articulations of the modern art gallery facilitated critical reflection upon the social construction of apparatuses of display within broader institutional frameworks of artistic production, display and reception. The allegorical structure taken by these interventions invited diverse readings and highlighted ambiguities of interpretation within the gallery space. In such a context, where mediation appears primary and ambiguity is an inherent aspect of the work, the critical reading itself can appear to rest on shifting sands. Such problematics have been a prominent feature in the subsequent development of practices of institutional critique; practices that have continued to

---

<sup>293</sup> John R. Spencer, 'The University Museum: Accidental Past, Purposeful Future?', in O'Doherty, 1972, p. 134.

examine the deployment of white cube conventions in the production of sites of artistic display. It is to these developments that my attention will turn next.

### Introduction

Since the emergence of practices of institutional critique in the late 1960s, the institution of art has expanded and transformed in ways that have required both a renegotiation of critical strategies and, as seen in the writings of art historians such as Miwon Kwon and James Meyer, a corresponding renegotiation of the terms of site-specific art. White cube conventions, now so embedded in languages of display that they can be re-formulated as 'downtown' art spaces in converted industrial sites or as enormous exhibition halls in art museum expansions, while still generating an atmosphere of silent contemplation, have played a pivotal role in the process of this expansion. These changes gathered pace in the 1990s, producing a context that Andrea Fraser describes in terms of the 'corporate megamuseum and the 24/7 global art market', or an over-arching framework within which critical practices are but one component.<sup>294</sup> Re-asserting the division of art and life, Fraser's central claim is that the "'outside" of the institution' is merely 'what, at any given moment, does not exist as an object of artistic discourses and practices'.<sup>295</sup> According to Fraser, institutional critique ought to be considered as one mode of practice amongst others that is collected, exhibited and commissioned by the museums and galleries. Art practitioners who adopt a critical stance towards the institution of art draw upon modes of practice that are part of that institution. The practitioner's first institutional involvement is to identify him or herself as an artist. Thus, to work outside of social constructions of art practice, display and reception is to make something else other than that art, because art is inevitably an institutional construction. Artists are involved in the institutions they critique, yet critique does also necessitate a distance from its object. Alexander Alberro claims critical practices of the late 1960s and 1970s achieved this by interrogating institutions through the principles that informed their mission, 'confronting the institution of art with the claim that it was not sufficiently committed to, let alone realising or fulfilling, the pursuit of publicness that had brought

<sup>294</sup> Andrea Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique', *Artforum*. 44:1 (Sep 2005), 278–286, p. 280.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282.

it into being in the first place'.<sup>296</sup> Fraser's position is shared by other writers, such as Miwon Kwon who argues that such critical gestures are now expected, co-opted, and turned towards institutional validation; forms of promotion for the self-critical intent of institutions.<sup>297</sup>

A key question I will address in this chapter is how it might be possible to generate the distance that critique requires, when critical practice is already an institutional construct. I will do this by mapping changes within the institution of art – specifically the gallery space, site specificity and critical practice – in order to establish a picture of the processes through which these developments have taken place. I will draw once again on the writings of Louis Althusser, this time to identify the significance of processes of recurrence and displacement in generating this process of expansion. Finally, in examining the later writings of Rosalind Krauss, I will consider how a recursive dimension within recent practices holds the possibility of re-generating critical distance.

## 1. Critical Distance

We can ground the issue of critical distance in relation to the term 'aesthetic use value' that Asher developed in relation to his 1974 Claire Copley Gallery installation.<sup>298</sup> Asher's interventions, as we have seen in Chapter Two, critiqued contradictions embedded within the gallery space, which, according to Buchloh, generated the work's function as a critique. Buchloh's analysis, in turn, correlates with Marx's conception of the dialectic, which I elucidated at the beginning of Chapter One. Here Marx identifies negation as a driving force, a questioning procedure that 'does not let itself be impressed by anything'.<sup>299</sup> Marx's choice of words imbue negation with an evasive quality; its negativity pulls it away from the social forms that it critiques. Yet in Marx's later writings the issues taken up by Althusser in his own theory of ideology are already set up:

<sup>296</sup> Alexander Alberro, 2009, p. 3.

<sup>297</sup> Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 2004).

<sup>298</sup> Asher, in Buchloh, ed., 1983, p. 96.

<sup>299</sup> Marx, 1976, p. 103.

The principal agents of the mode of production itself, the capitalist and the wage-labourer, are as such merely embodiments, personifications of capital and of wage-labour; definite characteristics stamped upon individuals by the process of social production.<sup>300</sup>

As we saw in Chapter One, for Althusser, ideology is 'a "representation" of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.'<sup>301</sup> Here individuals are conceived as agents of the mode of production, functioning through roles ascribed by mechanisms reproducing the social formation. Furthermore, in the function of a representation of an imaginary relation, thought models social forms according to its own structures and what the theorist terms *symptomatic reading* is central to the possibility of criticality – or, our critical labour must work upon the interpretative mechanisms through which we read social reality in the roles ascribed to us by the social formation.

Through symptomatic reading, we locate and work through the contradictions within our own habits of thinking. Althusser notes, 'Knowledge working on its 'object' [...] does not work on the *real* object but on the peculiar raw material which constitutes, in the strict sense of the term, its 'object' (of knowledge) and which, even in its most rudimentary forms of knowledge is distinct from the *real object*'.<sup>302</sup> In this sense critical thought is directed to the manner in which its own operations frame social reality - its *problematic* – rather than through direct reference to social reality itself.<sup>303</sup> The problematic is the theoretical armature through which it becomes possible to raise certain questions in specific ways, generating solutions that are also specific to the problematic through which they are approached.<sup>304</sup>

<sup>300</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. III*, 4th Impression (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), p. 880.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>302</sup> Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London: New Left Books, 1970), p. 43.

<sup>303</sup> Althusser outlines this term at the close of *Marxism and Humanism*. 'There you are face to face with your real object, obliged to forge the requisite and adequate concepts, to think it, obliged to accept the fact that the old concepts and in particular the concept of real-man or real humanism will not allow you to *think the reality of men*, that to reach immediacy, which is precisely not an immediacy, it is necessary, as always where knowledge is concerned, to make a long detour. You have abandoned the old domain the old concepts. Here you are in a new domain, for which new concepts will give you knowledge. The sign that a real change in locus and problematic has occurred, and that a new problematic is beginning, the adventure of science in development.' Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>304</sup> The issue of reification has historically functioned as a key concept within discussions of critical distance. Reification is a process through which values are reduced to quantities, objectifying the products of human labour, even thought itself. The term played an important role for critical theorists such as Max



Critical reading directed at any social formation also faces the further challenge that it must address the dynamic interaction of three levels of ideological, political and economic practice held in an uneven, dynamic yet structural interaction. Thus the base and superstructure exist in a complex relation: reproduction occurs at both levels, as do contradictions, yet ultimately they are most fundamental at the level of economic relations.<sup>305</sup> The example from Marx's *On The Jewish Question* that I considered in Chapter One, whereby political emancipation does not bring human emancipation because it leaves property relations untouched, attests to this.<sup>306</sup> However, contradictions within the superstructure can and do play a pivotal role in maintaining contradictions within the base structure, a process that Althusser defines as 'overdetermination'.<sup>307</sup> Althusser claims that overdetermination brings complexity to the concrete circumstances in which class inequality is manifested. Thus, in theory, contradictions between the means and the relations of production can appear with clarity, but, in practice, when coupled with contradictions produced at ideological and political levels, the manner of their resolution can appear obscured. Thus Althusser concludes that

the economic dialectic is never active *in the pure state*; in History, these instances, the superstructures, etc. - are never seen to step respectfully aside

---

Horkheimer, who used it to consider the extent to which processes of reasoning had become instrumentalised. Writing in 1946, Horkheimer claimed that reason had become equatable with 'procedures for purposes [that were] more or less taken for granted and supposedly self-explanatory. It attaches little importance to the question of whether the purposes as such are reasonable.' (Max Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason* (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 3, 7.) Here thought has been reduced to a quantifiable result. It has been instrumentalised as a form of calculation. Althusser, though, was suspicious of the non-instrumentalised opposite of reified thought upon which this theory appeared to rest, claiming that 'The whole, fashionable, theory of 'reification' depends on a projection of the theory of alienation found in the early texts, particularly the *1844 Manuscripts*, onto the theory of 'fetishism' in *Capital*'. The ideas of alienation that I developed in Chapter One come here under Althusser's critical scrutiny. Indeed, in those early texts of Marx, alienation is viewed as the negation of man's human essence, and thus Althusser writes, 'The penetration of philosophy into the proletariat will be the conscious revolt of man against his inhuman conditions.' (Louis Althusser, 'Marxism and Humanism', in *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005), p. 226). In the writing of *Capital*, however, Althusser identifies a break in Marx's thought, with three elements: '(1) The formation of a theory of history and politics based on radically new concepts: the concepts of the social formation, productive forces, relations of production, superstructure, ideologies, determination in the last instance by the economy, specific determination of the other levels, etc. (2) A radical critique of the *theoretical* pretensions of every philosophical humanism. (3) The definition of humanism as an *ideology*.' (Louis Althusser, 2005, p. 227)

<sup>305</sup> Tom Bottomore, Laurence Harris, V.G. Kiernan and Ralph Miliband, eds. *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (London: Blackwell 2005), p. 470

<sup>306</sup> Karl Marx, 1994b, p. 8.

<sup>307</sup> Althusser, 2005, pp. 87-128.

when their work is done, or when the Time comes, in his pure phenomena, to scatter before His Majesty the Economy as he strides along the royal road of the Dialectic.<sup>308</sup>

Ideological practices and modes of representation are part of this complex structure, and their contradictions weigh on the perception of contradictions at other (economic) levels, as do economic levels on the production of ideology. 'Ideology is a system (with its own logic and rigour) of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts), depending on the case endowed with a historical existence and a role within a given society'.<sup>309</sup> Foregrounding terms that will later be taken up by Miwon Kwon and James Meyer in their discussion of site-specific art, Catherine Belsey links the notion of ideology with the related term, discourse. According to Belsey, discourse is a 'domain of language use, a particular way of talking (and writing and thinking)'.<sup>310</sup> Drawing upon the position developed by Althusser in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1970), Belsey identifies ideology as 'the very condition of our experience of the world, unconscious precisely in that it is unquestioned, taken for granted'.<sup>311</sup> The link between the two rests in how 'ideology is *inscribed in* discourse in the sense that it is literally written or spoken *in it*'.<sup>312</sup> Warren Montag conveys the sense of ideology's investment within material practices in his essay "The Soul is the Prison of the Body': Althusser and Foucault, 1970-1975':

There are only exteriorities, not only the materialities of actions and movements but also the materialities of discourse, whether written, spoken, or silent and invisible, but still material. [...] Ideas, beliefs, consciousness are always immanent in the irreducible materiality of discourses, actions, practices.<sup>313</sup>

Althusser's and Belsey's references to reading and language-use raise the issues of interpretation and behavioural response within the gallery space that I considered in

---

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>310</sup> Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London: Methuen and Co, 1980), p. 5.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid..

<sup>312</sup> Ibid..

<sup>313</sup> Warren Montag, "The Soul is the Prison of the Body': Althusser and Foucault, 1970-1975', *Yale French Studies*, No. 88, 'Depositions: Althusser, Balibar, Macherey, and the Labor of Reading', (1995), p. 67.

Chapter Two. The materiality of discourse is captured in the example of the speech-act that Roland Barthes examined in 'The Death of the Author' (1968). I argued here that engaging with the formalised context of the art exhibition involved addressing questions about the performance of roles (audience member or gallerist) and the various ways in which they might be engaged. Here reading is understood as a directed, active, productive process of interpretation and the ground of intentional behaviour, and hence an essential element of the reproduction of ideology through social practices. A critical reading, then, has to be attentive to contradictions inherent in the material practices responsible for the reproduction of ideology. Reading is the space in which existing modes of interpretation are rendered contestable. This sense is conveyed well by Paul de Man, who says that 'reading is an argument... because it has to go against the grain of what one would want to happen in the name of what has to happen'.<sup>314</sup> From within this framework critical distance is re-formulated as and bounded within the act of reading. It is through such procedures that interrogative readings might contest ideology in contrast to readings that reproduce ideology.

The issue of critical distance is raised in a number of texts that offer theoretical grounding for the project of critical postmodernism. Hal Foster has been a prominent voice: '[A] resistant postmodernism is concerned with a critical deconstruction of tradition [...] with a critique of origins, not a return to them. In short, it seeks to question rather than exploit cultural codes, to explore rather than conceal social and political affiliations'.<sup>315</sup> Thus, following Althusser, Barthes and de Man, criticality is identified with the process of reading. In his essay 'Re: Post' (1984), Foster develops this analysis, claiming that 'postmodernist art [...] enfolds a contradiction: it must use, as methodological tools at least, the very concepts that it calls into question. It may be too much to assert that such complicity is a conspiracy, but a convention, form, tradition, etc., *is* only deconstructed from within'.<sup>316</sup> As we will see, cultural codes, conventions and traditions became the sites in which practices of institutional critique of the 1990s (which Hito Steyerl identifies with a 'critique of representation'<sup>317</sup>) operated. This type of proximity, or even complicity, was addressed in Foster's later essay, 'Whatever

<sup>314</sup> Paul de Man, 'Preface' in Carol Jacobs, *The Dissimulating Harmony: Images of Interpretation in Nietzsche, Rilke and Benjamin* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. xiii.

<sup>315</sup> Foster, 1983, p. xii.

<sup>316</sup> Foster, 1984, p. 189.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

Happened to Postmodernism?' (1996), in which he highlighted the issue of 'corrective distance' as a prerequisite for criticality, claiming that '[c]ritical distance cannot be foregone *and* it must be re-thought'.<sup>318</sup>

However, Miwon Kwon's writings on the critical interventions of the 1990s suggest that establishing this space of critique within the institution of art draws forth further problems. For example, examining the ways in which artists like Fred Wilson were commissioned by art institutions in the 1990s (an example we will consider later in this argument) Kwon identifies how institutions might commission critical interventions as confirmation of their own sense of responsibility or their own self-questioning attitude. This attests to Fraser's argument that critique needs to be understood as an institutionalised practice. In such a context, the distance that an interrogative act creates between itself and its object appears to evaporate when the critical procedures employed belong to the context in question. In such circumstances, the agent of critique – as Alberro portrayed artists such as Michael Asher and Daniel Buren, who ushered in institutional critique as a convention of practice – might be reduced to a performer reiterating the role that these conventions established. Here the authority and authenticity of the critical gesture would be reduced to theatre. Andrea Fraser's own performance works deal explicitly with this point. In her 1989 work, *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk* (Fig. 32), she performed the role of a gallery guide at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, taking an unsuspecting group of visitors on a tour of the collection that consisted in increasingly dislocated, disjointed, statements. The subsequent 1991 publication of the performance in the journal *October* showed the performance to be a tissue of citations drawn from texts that appear to orbit around notions of the museum and its public mission. In the mode of complicity that Foster ascribed to postmodern critique, Fraser filled her performance as the museum's spokesman with an array of received statements that in their misdirection increasingly reflected the prejudices of her character:

*Addressing The Birth of Venus:*

“Lower-class culture: there is a substantial segment of present-day American society whose way of life, values, and characteristic patterns of behaviour are

---

<sup>318</sup> Foster, 1996, pp. 224, 225.

the product of a distinctive cultural system which may be termed 'lower class'.<sup>319</sup>

The work undermined the authority typically endowed upon tour guides as representatives of the museum – a mixture of professionalism, scholarship and public responsibility – yet it also highlighted the constructed nature of the role itself, a received identity adopted by Fraser. In situations like this, a layering of figurative language occurs whereby the authority of an identity supports its performance. Craig Owens addresses such instances at the close of his essay, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism' (1980). The authority of the museum guide's rhetoric – taken either as fact or on trust – can be added to the series of examples Owens identifies whereby literal levels of meaning are constituted through a 'web of substitutions and reversals properly characteristic of the symbolic'.<sup>320</sup> The institutional construction of the figure of the tour-guide as a voice of authority frames Fraser's performance through this identity, which she reduces to a mockery. The issue that Owens outlines is the instability through which such a voice of authority is anchored through two levels of rhetorical construction, the social construction of the role itself and their performance of it. By highlighting these constructions through her performance Fraser emphasises the unstable nature of voices of authority like tour guides within institutions such as public art museums. Owens substantiates this point with reference to Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Still* series (1977-80), in which the artist performs a series of female roles drawn from cinema history. 'Sherman's women are not women but images of women, specular models of femininity projected by the media to encourage imitation, identification; they are, in other words, tropes, figures'.<sup>321</sup> This foregrounds the problem of distance as an issue for postmodern critique. How can the position of authority to critique be constructed, if the agent of critique is a construct or an outgrowth of the very social formation it seeks to critique?

---

<sup>319</sup> Andrea Fraser, 'Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk', *October*, 57 (Summer 1991), p. 114. The text is citation from Walter B. Miller, quoted in Chaim I. Waxman, *The Stigma of Poverty: A Critique of Poverty Theories and Policies* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1977), p. 26.

<sup>320</sup> Owens, 1980b, p. 76.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.



Fig 32, Andrea Fraser, *Museum Highlights*, performed at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1989

This returns us to the practice of critical intervention within the gallery space, and how the architectural production of distance from the social (albeit through the ideological construction of the institution's autonomy) offers the possibility of maintaining a space of critique. Following Bürger's analysis of the institution of art, and O'Doherty's analysis of white cube conventions, the modern art gallery might be conceived in terms of a social production of distance – from instrumentality, and economic exchange. Recurrent readings of the gallery space in these terms have stabilised its identity for over half a century, allowing critics such as David Beech to conceive of ways in which the status that the gallery space continues to enjoy within society can be mobilised in ways that he considers to be socially progressive.

Before examining this issue, however, I will firstly examine the changes that such apparatuses of display and practices of institutional critique have undergone since the emergence of this mode of practice in the 1960s.

## 2. The Functional Site

The critiques I have considered thus far have been directed at the architectural structures of institutional sites. In the 1990s, site-oriented practices underwent a series of methodological transformations that led commentators such as Miwon Kwon and James Meyer to renegotiate the terms of site-specificity away from the site as a specific, bounded location (literal site) and towards sites as socio-linguistically determined junctions, or nodes within communication and transportation networks (functional site). Drawing out the characteristics of the functional site, Meyer references Craig Owens' theorization of postmodern allegory:

The functional site may or may not incorporate a physical place. It certainly does not *privilege* this place. Instead it is a process, an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and textual filiations and the bodies that move between them (the artist's above all). It is an informational site, a palimpsest of texts, photographs and video recordings, physical places and things: an allegorical site, to recall Craig Owens's term [...].<sup>322</sup>

The functional site, then, can be seen to share the same orientation towards questioning of cultural codes that Hal Foster attributed to postmodern critique. Following Owens, Meyer roots the shift towards the 'functional site' in practices like Asher's, because Asher dealt with the gallery space as a socio-linguistic construct, an institution amongst the others that comprised the social formation. Asher's practice can also be seen as prototypical of the emergence of the functional site because of its relations with other legalistic and documentary conventions through which, as we shall see, his works' site-specificity (its bounding to the location and duration of the exhibition) succeeds in correlating with Meyer's notion that the functional site is 'a site within a network of sites, an institution among institutions.'<sup>323</sup>

---

<sup>322</sup> Meyer, 2000, p. 25.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid..

## 2a. Asher's 'Agreement Commissioning Works of Art' (1975)

Asher's introduction of a contract as a component of all his site-specific projects since 1975 grounded his projects in legal agreements. In 1973 he began to work in private gallery spaces and exhibited in the Lisson Gallery in London, the Heiner Friedrich Gallery in Cologne, and the Galleria Toselli in Milan.<sup>324</sup> Without the artist's knowledge, both Heiner Friedrich and Nicolas Longsdail of the Lisson Gallery began to make arrangements for the sale of the work that Asher had exhibited in Cologne to the collector Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, thus demonstrating that Asher's works existed beyond their material form as plans or proposals. This led Asher to supplement the production and display of his future installations with a legal agreement drawn up at the planning stage. In consultation with the lawyer Arthur Alef, he developed a contractual agreement that he has subsequently used in all of his dealings since 1975 with galleries and museums.<sup>325</sup> While developing his contract, Asher also consulted 'The Artist's Reserved Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement' (ARRTSA), written by the lawyer Robert Projanski and the curator Seth Siegelaub and published in April 1971 issue of *Art News* and in the catalogue for 'Documenta 5' in 1972. (Fig. 33) The use of legal means to attribute the status of artwork was also examined in Robert Morris's *Document (Statement of Aesthetic Refusal)* (1963), which was produced by presenting an artwork bought, though not paid for, by the architect Philip Johnson alongside a notarised legal text that withdrew the art status of the original work. Morris's work juxtaposed two correlated objects (one artistic and one legal), and in the same way, Asher's contract supplemented and secured the status of his installations as one-off site-specific works. Thus the critiques Asher sought to make of institutional contexts of artistic display, depended upon the institutional support of legal convention that supplemented the agency of the artist.

<sup>324</sup> Lisson Gallery, London, England (August 24–September 16, 1973); Heiner Friedrich Gallery, Cologne, West Germany (September 4–September 28, 1973); Galleria Toselli, Milan, Italy (September 13–October 8, 1973).

<sup>325</sup> Eric Golo Stone, 'A Document of Regulation and Reflexive Process: Michael Asher's Contractual Agreement Commissioning Works of Art (1975)', <<http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/a-document-of-regulation-and-reflexive-process-michael-asher%E2%80%99s-contractual-agreement-commissioning-works-of-art-1975/>> [accessed 13 July 2013].





Fig. 33, Bob Projansky, and Seth Siegelau, 'The Artist's Reserved Rights of Transfer and Sales Agreement', offset-printed black-and-white, 56 x 43.5 cm, 1971.

In her critique of site-specific practice, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2004), Miwon Kwon considers a range of exhibitions in the late 1980s wherein site-specific projects from the late 1960s were re-staged.<sup>326</sup> She focused in particular upon an incident in 1989 whereby Ace Gallery in Los Angeles sought and was granted permission from the Panza collection to re-fabricate works by Carl Andre and Donald Judd locally to save on shipping costs.<sup>327</sup> Decisions like this reduced the physical work to one of a possible series of fabrications, and raised the status of the artist's plans or instructions as the materialisation of his/her conception of the work, the production of which could then be delegated to others. Kwon claims that such incidents displace the author-status of the artist, whose '*authorship*' as producer of objects is reconfigured as his/her *authority* to *authorise* in the capacity of director or supervisor of (re)production.<sup>328</sup> In the context of Asher's practice, this meant retaining authority over his interventions. Citing a section titled 'Removal and Duplication', Martha Buskirk identifies Asher's contract with the 'limiting and controlling' of the display and reception of the work.<sup>329</sup> Eric Golo Stone contests this in his own analysis of

<sup>326</sup> Kwon cites 'L'art conceptuel, une perspective' at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris (1989), and 'The New Sculpture 1965-75: Between Geometry and Abstraction' (1990), and 'Immaterial Objects' (1990-91) at the Whitney Museum. Kwon, 2004, p. 37.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., pp. 39-42.

<sup>329</sup> Buskirk, 2003, p. 53.

Asher's contract, framing the artist's decision in terms of responsibility and claiming that 'the contractual demands pronounce the terms provided by the work itself.'<sup>330</sup> Here Stone draws emphasis to the temporal and site specificity of Asher's installations, which were limited only to the duration of the exhibition itself. This is of particular interest with regard to the critical status of the interventions. Asher states, 'Responsibility is not attendant. In beginning to think about a work, I try first to be accountable for its reception and distribution.'<sup>331</sup> Andrea Fraser makes the point even more strongly in a discussion on the status of criticism with post-millennial art practice in *October*: 'Artists have a responsibility to represent themselves... I define criticism as an ethical practice of self-reflective evaluation of the ways in which we participate in the reproduction of relations of domination.'<sup>332</sup> These are important considerations, but the key point I wish to draw out here is that the authority of the critique, which Asher sought to preserve through the contract by binding exhibiting institutions to stipulations of non-removal and non-duplication, also bound his own interventions to legal agreement as guarantors of the work's site-specificity. Limiting his works to the singular period over which the intervention remained in-situ raised the status of the documentary images which now remain as the record and authentication of the work's existence.

## **2b. *Writings 1973-83 on Works 1969-79***

Once dismantled, the material existence of the Asher's installations had to be read through the documentary image, which might be endlessly re-printed and re-contextualised. Nick Kaye notes in his critical reading of site-specific practice, 'whether in the work or subsequent to it, documentation has a place within site-specific practice precisely because it explicitly presents itself in the absence of its object.'<sup>333</sup> Here, once again, two levels of rhetorical construction define the authority of the image – the convention of photo-documentation, and the reception of specific photographs in terms

<sup>330</sup> Eric Golo Stone, *ibid.*.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>332</sup> Andrea Fraser, quoted in George Baker and others, 'Round Table: The Present Conditions of Art Criticism', *October*, 100, 'Obsolescence' (Spring, 2002), 200-228, pp. 213-4. Cited in Eric Golo Stone, *ibid.*.

<sup>333</sup> Kaye, 2000, p. 218.

of those conventions. We can identify these through reference to images of Asher's work documented in a book the artist co-authored with Benjamin Buchloh, *Writings 1973-83 on Works 1969-79* (1983). The book features analysis of each installation, accompanied by documentary photographs. The images are made by a number of different photographers ranging from the expedient pictures taken by Asher himself and gallerists such as Nicolas Longsdail, to the formally resolved images of Asher's Pomona College work by the professional art photographer Frank Thomas. In their representational function, though, each image shares an equal status as official documentation sanctioned by the artist. These images are also supplemented by further documentation of the relevant stages of each project. Images of both the Pomona College and the Claire Copley interventions are conveyed through axonometric drawings typical of official architectural planning processes.<sup>334</sup> The book's layout displays a kind of literalism: graphic components are bluntly abutted, yielding a unitary, grid-like layout that maximises legibility. The authors offer clear, yet detailed visual and textual analysis, indicating that documenting the fact of these works was key aim for the authors. The factual documentation is at odds with Asher's interest in the mutability of interpretation within the institutional site. Asher's practice must appear precise and factual in order to perform this function, both in terms of the intervention itself and subsequent documentation of the intervention, which once the work is gone attests to this critique. Thus, one can engage with *Writings 1973-83 on Works 1969-79* through the same analysis which, as we saw in Chapter Two, Fred Orton read minimalist installation, which he claimed 'is a figured effect of the rhetorical structure of language; it is a trope among tropes – a special trope that effects the erasure of its own metaphoricity'.<sup>335</sup> Like minimalism the documentation presented in Asher's book attests to the fact of the critique in the same way that the work of Judd and Morris attested to the fact of the object.

Asher's documentation possesses what Roland Barthes terms a 'Reality Effect'.<sup>336</sup> Citing the inclusion of a description of a barometer as a 'superfluous detail' in Flaubert's 'A Simple Heart', from his collection *Three Tales* (1877), Barthes considers why such

<sup>334</sup> One might contrast such a visual language with the apparent informality and mutability of an artist's sketch.

<sup>335</sup> Fred Orton, 1987.

<sup>336</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The Reality Effect', in Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), p. 141.

descriptions are included that exceed the 'order of the notable' within the narrative.<sup>337</sup> In response to such occurrences Barthes poses the question, 'Is everything in narrative significant, and if not, if insignificant stretches subsist in the narrative syntagm, what is ultimately, so to speak, the significance of their insignificance?'<sup>338</sup> The pursuit of detail in Asher's description of his Claire Copley installation appears excessive in a similar way. A small piece of carpet, for instance, needed to be replaced in order to 'restore the display surfaces of the gallery to presentation standards.'<sup>339</sup> Every crack that Asher filled in the office area was detailed by the artist, alongside an explanation of how it came into existence. Focusing on the example of Flaubert, Barthes argues that the significance of such details lies in the contrast of the 'true to life' (physical reality) and the 'intelligible' (language), and in this sense the 'superfluous detail' gains its justification from the excessive value attributed to physical contexts and interactions.<sup>340</sup> These points of excess in Asher's evidence indicate an anxiety rendered through the instability of representation, upon which Allan Sekula comments in his essay on documentary photography, 'Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)' (1976-8): 'The rhetorical strength of documentary is imagined to reside in the unequivocal character of the camera's evidence, in an essential realism. [...] Photography, according to this belief, reproduces the visible world.'<sup>341</sup>

Yet against this assumption Sekula claims '[t]he only "objective" truth that photographs offer is the assertion that somebody or something was somewhere and took a picture. Everything else, everything beyond the imprinting of a trace, is up for grabs.'<sup>342</sup> According to this theory, then, the grainy high contrast images of often empty rooms are framed through the testimony of their titles and their inclusion within the book co-authored by Asher as official documentation of the artist's work. The conventional acceptance of the authority of the artist as author, and conventional acceptance of the reference of the documentary image to the fact of the event it shows function here to secure the testimony of these images.

---

<sup>337</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>339</sup> Buchloh, 1983, p. 95.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>341</sup> Allan Sekula, 'Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)', in Allan Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photoworks 1973-83* (Halifax (Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984), pp. 56-62, p. 56.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

In Barthes' formulation this ideology of the photographic image is constructed through the '*direct*' collusion of a referent and signifier; the signified is expelled from the sign'.<sup>343</sup> This is, I think, precisely the problematic that the documentary image holds for Asher's practice. When accepted in these terms by the reader the photographs of the installations, assembled evidence and description of the work together act as testament to the no-longer existing installation. Yet they can only act in this way because of the rhetorical construction of the photographic image as a factual conveyor of events.

## 2c. The Functional Site

Asher's use of legal agreements and project documentation to secure the site-specificity of his interventions, as part of his critique of the institutional site itself, helped to move art practice towards what we have termed the 'functional site'; Meyer notes that Asher's practice bridged the gap between 'literal' and 'functional'.<sup>344</sup> In his formulation, the literal site is a product of debates around minimalism, a claim that Kwon extends:

[s]ite specific art was initially based in a phenomenological or experimental understanding of the site, defined primarily as an agglomeration of the actual physical attributes of a location [...] with architecture serving as a foil for the artwork in many instances.<sup>345</sup>

In both Meyer's and Kwon's formulations, Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* (1981), a single curved sheet of cor-ten steel that spread three and a half metres high and thirty seven metres wide, is used as an example of a literal formulation of site-specificity<sup>346</sup> (Fig. 34). Serra claimed that to remove the work from Federal Plaza would be to destroy it;<sup>347</sup> he believed that in a unique interaction with the site the sculpture drew the attention of plaza users to the underpinning spatial and visual dynamics of their encounter, thus

<sup>343</sup> Barthes, 1989, p. 147.

<sup>344</sup> Meyer, in Suderburg, ed., 2000, pp. 23-37.

<sup>345</sup> Kwon, 2004, p. 3.

<sup>346</sup> Serra's piece was commissioned by the Arts-In-Architecture program of the U.S. General Services Administration in 1979, installed in Federal Plaza New York in 1981 and removed in 1989 after five years of legal proceedings.

<sup>347</sup> Kwon, 2004, p. 73.

resisting the socially constructed meaning that mediated this space that otherwise linked government offices.<sup>348</sup> Thus Serra aimed at what Kwon calls a 'phenomenological model' of site-specificity that also informed Judd's interest in material specificity and Morris's focus upon perceptual gestalts.<sup>349</sup> In a statement she offered in defence of the work, Rosalind E. Krauss concurs: 'The kind of vector *Tilted Arc* explores is that of vision, more specifically what it means for vision to be invested with a purpose [...] this sculpture is constantly mapping a kind of projectile of the gaze'.<sup>350</sup> The eventual removal of *Tilted Arc* demonstrates the difficulty of attempts, like Serra's, to free social spaces from socio-linguistic determinations and orient responses to them around a 'phenomenological model' without the bounding frame of the gallery space.

---

<sup>348</sup> Serra notes, 'The viewer becomes aware of himself and of his movement through the plaza. As he moves, the sculpture changes. Contraction and expansion of the sculpture result from the viewer's movement. Step by step the perception not only of the sculpture but of the entire environment changes.' (Richard Serra, quoted in Vilis R. Inde, *Art in the Courtroom* (Westport: Praeger, 1998), p. 59.) The artist also later claimed that the work 'initiat[ed] a new behavioural and perceptual orientation to the site [which] demands a new critical adjustment to one's experience of the place. (Richard Serra, *Writings: Interviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 202.)

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., p. 12. Several artists and critics involved in the development of Minimalism drew upon the Phenomenological theory of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. For example in her text on Donald Judd, 'Allusion and Illusion in Judd', (1966) Rosalind E. Krauss states, '[Judd's] sculpture can only be sensed in its present coming into being as an object given in the imperious unity, the presence, the insurpassable plenitude which is for us the definition of the real'. (Rosalind E. Krauss, 'Allusion and Illusion in Judd', *Artforum*, 4:9 (May 1966), 24-26.) The citation within Krauss's text is drawn from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sence*, trans. by Hubert Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 24.

<sup>350</sup> Rosalind E. Krauss, quoted in Martha Buskirk and Clara Weyergraf-Serra, *The Destruction of Tilted Arc: Documents* (Massachusetts, M.I.T. Press, 1991), p.82. Much of this was lost on the bemused users of the square, some of whom, Harriet Senie reports, named it 'the wind breaker', and the GSA Regional Administrator criticised what he viewed as the 'destructive effects of the sculpture upon the social function of the plaza.' (Harriet Sernie, "'Tilted Arc": Art and Non-Art Issues', *Art Journal* 48:4, Critical Issues in Public Art (Winter 1989), 298-302, p. 298.)



Fig. 34, Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, Cor-Ten Steel, Federal Plaza, New York, USA, 1981-89.

In contrast, Meyer cites 'Robert Smithson's polymathic enterprise, whose vectored and discursive notion of place opposes Serra's phenomenological model' as a point of emergence for the relational dimension of this re-model of site-specificity.<sup>351</sup> Paralleling Althusser's commentary on ideology, a key theme in Smithson's site/nonsite works is how the standpoint (both the place and the mindset) from which a site is observed must shape its meaning. Discussing Donald Judd's coloured plexiglas works in his article 'Entropy and the New Monuments' (1966), Smithson claimed that people looked at and saw through works like *Untitled* (1965) (Fig. 35), witnessing its internal and external structure and the reflective surface of the plexiglas. There was no direct recourse to the literal object for the viewer, as it was in fact a construct of related components revealed through the act of reading. Furthermore, the steel ends of this work were held together by five tensioning wires, making its solidity and specificity a condition of the physical yet invisible forces that make its parts cohere. Where Judd privileges materiality and objecthood, Smithson privileges time, emphasising the activity of reading through which people attempt to make sense of the work's parts: 'The concealed surfaces in some of Judd's works are hideouts for time. His art vanishes into a series of motionless intervals based on an order of solids.'<sup>352</sup>

<sup>351</sup> Meyer, in Suderburg, ed., 2000, p. 25.

<sup>352</sup> Robert Smithson, 'Entropy and the New Monuments', *Artforum*, 4:10 (June 1966), 26-31, p. 26.

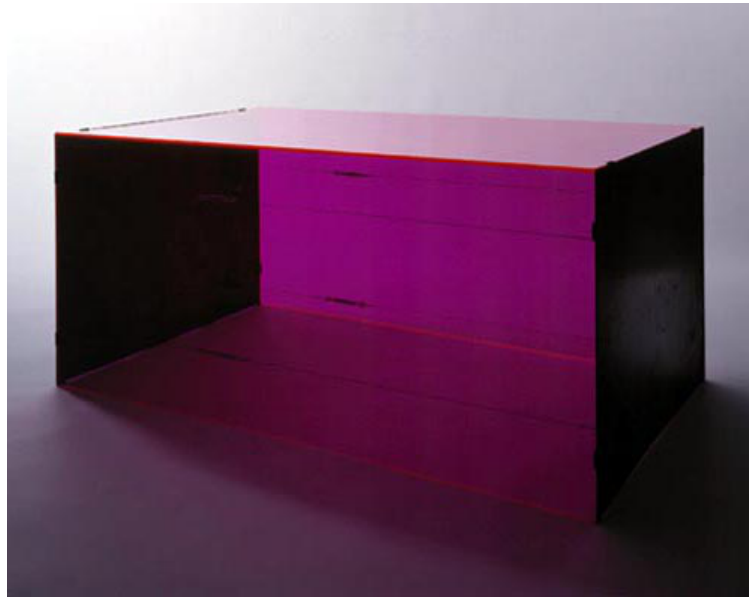


Fig. 35, Donald Judd, *Untitled*, coloured plexiglass and steel (1965)

This interest in the process of reading informs Smithson's concern with visual encounters with the landscape. 'The interesting thing about the site is that, unlike the non-site, it throws you out to the fringes. In other words, there's nothing to grasp onto except for the cinders and there's no way of focusing on a particular place.'<sup>353</sup> One looks for a boundary through which to demarcate the place, without which one remains lost in the details.

The framing of such encounters through documentation was examined in Smithson's *Nonsite, Franklin, New Jersey* (1968) (Fig. 36), presented as part of the artist's show presented at the James Cohen Gallery in New York, which featured a triangular-shaped set of five wall-based aerial photographs taken near the Franklin Furnace Mines in New Jersey, and a corresponding set of floor-based bins, both alluding to the converging site lines of single-point perspective, emphasising conventions that make visual experience readable. Like the over-determined relations of the social formation theorised by Althusser, in Asher's *Writings 1973-83 on Works 1969-79*, Smithson's site/nonsite works object, document and convention are brought into a relation of reciprocal co-dependency. Meyer's notion of the functional site conveys these social relationships through which material contexts are structured, providing a model for site-related practices that Serra's post-minimalist public sculpture projects

<sup>353</sup> Robert Smithson, in Lisa Bear and others, 'Discussions with Heizer, Oppenheim, Smithson', *Avalanche*, 1 (Fall 1970), reprinted in Flam, 1996, pp. 242-252, p. 249.



seek to resist, by asserting the literal qualities of materials within urban spaces.



Fig. 36, *Nonsite, Franklin, New Jersey*, painted wooden bins limestone, with work on paper: gelatin-silver prints and typescript on paper, 1968.

### 3. Second Wave Institutional Critique

Meyer cites figures like Mark Dion, Andrea Fraser, Renée Green and Christian Philip Müller as advancing the notion of the functional site in the context of the 1990s.<sup>354</sup> These artists conceived of sites in terms of movements and interactions between physical spaces and modes of representation, advancing the conception of the institutional site as a socially ordered location, active in the reproduction of ideology. In the hands of these practitioners, the art museum is conceived of simply as one institution amongst others and as a support for material practices through which social codes and value structures are reproduced. Thus, Meyer claims, site-specificity was re-conceived as a 'process, [...] a chain of meanings and imbricated histories'.<sup>355</sup> Furthermore, as Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray state in their preface to *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Re-inventing Institutional Critique*, '[to] the economic and political discourse of their predecessors, the practices of this "second generation"

<sup>354</sup> Meyer, in Suderburg, ed., 2000, p. 24.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid..

added a growing awareness of the forms of subjectivity and the modes of its formation.<sup>356</sup> Whilst artists such as Buren and Asher intervened within the architectural frames of specific institutional contexts, second generation practitioners of institutional critique conceived of the institution as grounded more broadly in forms of social practice and representation active within society as a whole.

Miwon Kwon identifies these practices with an alternate 'locational anchor'<sup>357</sup>, which she terms a 'discursive formation'.<sup>358</sup> To substantiate this, she refers to the practices of Tom Burr and John Lindell, and how they focused upon 'issues concerning the construction and dynamics of (homo)sexuality', and how certain projects by Renée Green and Fred Wilson looked at 'the legacies of colonialism, slavery [and] racism [...] as they impact upon identity politics'.<sup>359</sup> Wilson's *Mining the Museum* (1992) (Fig. 37), an intervention within the collection displays of the Maryland Historical Society, juxtaposed a pair of slave shackles alongside an elaborate silver tea set, producing, in the words of Alice Correia, an intervention within 'the historical representation and narrative (or lack thereof) of black people within the museum's displays'.<sup>360</sup> Drawing attention to representations that mediate the natural sciences, Mark Dion's *On Tropical Nature* (1991) appropriated institutional processes of research and display through which knowledge of natural phenomena are constructed. The artist collected samples of plant and animal life in the Venezuelan rainforest and delivered them to the museum Sala Mendoza in Caracas, where they were displayed in a group exhibition, thus intervening within conventions of curatorial practice and representations of nature.<sup>361</sup> These projects pay close attention to specific instances where recurrent linguistically-structured material practices reproduce ideologies.

---

<sup>356</sup> Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray, eds. *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Re-inventing Institutional Critique* (London: Mayfly, 2009), pp. xiv – xv.

<sup>357</sup> Kwon, 2004, p. 28.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>360</sup> Alice Correia, 'Fred Wilson', *Third Text*, 25:5, 112 (October 2011), p. 639.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid..



Fig. 37, Fred Wilson, *Mining the Museum*, installation view, Maryland Historical Society, 1992  
p. 128

Highlighting overlaps between art and life, these projects of the 1990s engaged with art practice as one field of social production amongst many others. Wilson worked as if he were a curator and Dion worked as if he were a biologist. Indeed, Meyer's phrasing of the term '*functional site*' juxtaposed these useful activities with the putatively functionless work of artists. Similarly, Kwon's reference to 'discursive' sites draws out the ways in which these practitioners 'relativise art as one among many forms of cultural work'.<sup>362</sup>

#### 4. Flexible Accumulation and 'critical' services

Althusser's notion of overdetermination rationalises the shift towards the reproduction of social discourses that we can observe within practices of institutional critique in the 1990s, practices that Meyer claims were informed by the 'postmodern premise [...] that information is material'.<sup>363</sup> The physical structures of these works – such as Wilson's collection displays and Dion's samples and research materials – are themselves

<sup>362</sup> Kwon, 2004, p. 24.

<sup>363</sup> Meyer, in Suderburg, ed., 2000, p. 29.

apparatuses through which ideologies – in these instances, those of ethnic representation and the authority of scientific research – are reproduced. The orientation of these practices mirrors a shift in the mode of production, which David Harvey has identified as a shift from 'Fordism' to 'flexible accumulation'.<sup>364</sup>

Fordism takes its name from Henry Ford's automated car assembly line, which opened in Michigan in 1913 and was characterised by division of labour into a synchronised and continuous production process, involving the cooperation of multiple workers at consistent levels of employment. Harvey argues that the unstable economic conditions of the 1970s generated new forms of production and employment, which he claims rest 'on flexibility with respect to labour processes, labour markets, products, and patterns of consumption [...] and above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological and organisational innovation'.<sup>365</sup> Flexible accumulation is characterised by short-term contracts, outsourcing, sub-contracting, exporting production to foreign sweatshops, declining union power and the de-regulation of the financial sector. Harvey locates the service-sector in areas such as finance, insurance, real-estate, health and education, a shift in emphasis 'from [the] production of goods [...] to the production of events' – and identifies it as emblematic of flexible accumulation.<sup>366</sup>

The service sector is also exemplary of a shift towards what the sociologist Maurizio Lazzarato terms 'Immaterial Labour'.<sup>367</sup> Lazzarato describes immaterial labour as comprising the 'informational and cultural content of the commodity'.<sup>368</sup> This refers both to changing forms of work that increasingly involve data handling and customer service, and what Lazzarato terms 'the production of the cultural content of the commodity', or the social production of 'fashions, tastes, consumer norms and [...] public opinion', as undertaken by, for example, advertising agencies.<sup>369</sup> Lazzarato argues that this emergence has generated new forms of commodity that share the immateriality of the labour processes that generated them:

---

<sup>364</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1990), pp. 125-140.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., pp. 156-7.

<sup>367</sup> Maurizio Lazzarato, 'Immaterial Labour', in Paulo Virno and Michael Hardt, *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), pp 133-150.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid..

The particularity of the commodity produced through immaterial labor (its essential use value being given by its value as informational and cultural content) consists in the fact that it is not destroyed in the act of consumption, but rather it enlarges, transforms and creates the “ideological” and cultural environment of the consumer.<sup>370</sup>

The immaterial commodity exists as a form of representation and serves informational, persuasive, promotional ends. In the phase of flexible accumulation, material production has been supplemented by interventions within discursive fields, re-producing specific ideologies.

In her article 'The Institution of Critique' (2009), Hito Steyerl argues that flexible accumulation brought about a renewed focus on market forces that led to the shrinkage of public institutions,<sup>371</sup> through a 'bourgeois institutional critique [whereby] the cultural institution [was conceived of as] primarily an economic one and as such had to be subjected to the laws of the market'.<sup>372</sup> Steyerl argues practitioners such as Dion and Wilson responded by re-conceptualising the public institution (as an object of critique) as the 'whole sphere of representation as a public sphere, where material representation ought to be implemented, for example in the form of the unbiased and proportional display of images of women or black people'.<sup>373</sup> Thus Fred Wilson rationalised his critical intervention within the collection of the Maryland Historical Society on the basis that 'how things are displayed in galleries and museums makes a huge difference in how one sees the world'.<sup>374</sup>

In her text 'What's Intangible, Transitory, Mediating, Participatory, and Rendered

<sup>370</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>371</sup> These changes can be identified as part of the politico-economic re-invigoration of capitalism initiated in the past twenty-five years around the establishment of free-flowing globalised trade networks and a corresponding shrinkage of welfare provisions within nation states. These structural adjustments are identified with the political philosophy of neo-liberalism that came to the fore with the Thatcher and Reagan administrations of the 1980s. David Harvey notes, 'Neoliberalization has in effect swept across the world like a vast tidal wave of institutional reform and discursive adjustment, and while there is plenty of evidence of its uneven geographical development, no place can claim total immunity (with the exception of a few states such as North Korea). Furthermore, the rules of engagement now established through the WTO (governing international trade) and by the IMF (governing international finance) instantiate neoliberalism as a global set of rules.' 'Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction', *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 88:2 (June 2006), 145-158.

<sup>372</sup> Hito Steyerl, 'The Institution of Critique', in Raunig and Ray, eds., 2009, p. 16.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>374</sup> Ivan Karp and Fred Wilson, 'Constructing the Spectacle of Culture in Museums', *Artpapers*, 17: 3 (May-June 1993), 2-9, p. 5. Reprinted in Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne, eds., 1996, pp. 251-268.

in the Public Sphere?', published in *October* in 1997, Andrea Fraser relates practices issuing from conceptual, site-specific and critical traditions to the emergent service sector. Fraser claims that whilst the shift towards 'artistic service provision' has occurred because of 'a self-conscious artistic critique of the cultural commodity', this reorientation of artistic production might also be 'an instance of art reflecting or emulating the historical conditions of a "service economy"'.<sup>375</sup> Fraser refers to the rising demand for 'project work', claiming that artists responding to this demand increasingly were addressing their projects not simply towards 'specific sites and situations', but also with particular regard towards 'specific relations to organizations and their representatives, curators, and other arts professionals'.<sup>376</sup> Once interventionist practices become 'in demand' in this way, the criticality of the intervention has to be weighed by those who engage with the reading it makes of the institutional context in relation to the service provided by that intervention in terms of the institution's broader aims. Here the demand for critical distance has to be squared by artists, institutions and exhibition visitors with the reality of services rendered.

Miwon Kwon identifies this development of a field of post-studio and site-oriented 'project work' as part of the 'unhinging of site-specificity' brought about by the pressures of the 'museum culture and the art market'.<sup>377</sup> Kwon identifies the commissioning of such projects as a kind of 'freelance' work, noting that 'if the artist is successful, he or she travels constantly as a freelancer, often working on more than one site-specific project at a time, globe-trotting as a guest, tourist, adventurer, temporary in-house critic, or pseudo-ethnographer'.<sup>378</sup> Kwon considers that this development once again throws up questions of authorship:

[The] presence of the artist has become an absolute pre-requisite for the execution/presentation of site-oriented projects. It is now the *performative* aspect of an artist's characteristic mode of operation [...] that is repeated and circulated as a new art commodity with the artist him/herself functioning as the primary

---

<sup>375</sup> Andrea Fraser, 'What's Intangible, Transitory, Mediating, Participatory, and Rendered in the Public Sphere?', *October*, 80 (Spring 1997), 111-116, p. 115.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid..

<sup>377</sup> Kwon, 2004, p. 37.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

vehicle for its verification, repetition, and circulation.<sup>379</sup>

Kwon notes that Wilson's Maryland project was quickly followed by a similar project, *The Museum of Mixed Metaphors* (1993), at the Seattle Art Museum, using a consistent methodology of intervention within collection displays – a development that Kwon considers can render 'critique rote and generic'.<sup>380</sup> Discussing his practice, Dion describes himself as 'a foreign troubleshooter who comes in with a new set of eyes and a new set of categories, and I bring with me my suitcase of ideas and the history of my work and concerns'.<sup>381</sup> Emphasising the shift in production theorised by Lazzarato, Kwon concludes:

What the current pattern points to, in fact, is the extent to which the commodity as a cipher of production and labour relations is no longer bound to the realm of manufacturing (of things) but defined in relation to the service and management industries. The artist as an over-specialised aesthetic object maker has been anachronistic for a long time already. What they *provide* now, rather than *produce*, are aesthetic, often 'critical-artistic' services.<sup>382</sup>

By commissioning such interventionist 'services', the institution entirely controls the manner in which it chooses to be criticised. Here it is useful to imagine an inverted doubling of the palimpsestic structure theorised by Owens: museum visitors might read the institution through the artist's intervention, and yet the institution might also narrate itself to others (public funding agencies, corporate sponsors, trustees, board members, charities) in terms of flexibility, virtue and self-questioning. Criticality can here become mired in competing rhetoric.

The changing status of critical practice is examined by Andrea Fraser in 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique' (2005). Fraser's article was published at a time when institutional critique had once again come to the fore; she cites the conference 'Institutional Critique and After' at the LA County Museum, and an issue of the art magazine *Texte Zur Kunst* dedicated to this topic in that year. As her title

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid..

<sup>381</sup> 'SHORT: Mark Dion: Methodology', from the VIDEO series 'art21 Exclusive', <<http://www.art21.org/videos/short-mark-dion-methodology>> [accessed 30 July 2013]

<sup>382</sup> Kwon, 2004, p. 37.

suggests, the critical procedures employed by figures such as Asher and Buren in 1960s and 1970s shaped the parameters of these post-millennial debates, a situation that Fraser notes has allowed institutional critique to be reduced to the acronym 'IC'.<sup>383</sup> Yet against the backdrop of these re-evaluations and retrospective accounts, Fraser argues that institutional critique 'could only have emerged within and, like all art, can only function within the institution art'.<sup>384</sup> Thus, like other forms of practice, critical intervention is procedural and has over the period of its development generated its own conventions. In this sense, critical readings undertaken by artists or exhibition visitors within museum or gallery spaces have to be understood as integral components of the institutional framework operative within that material site. From positions within that framework, in the performance of these roles, critical distance is constructed as a parameter of the institution. It is a part of the 'institution of critique'.<sup>385</sup> Fraser argues against any urge to refer to the institution of art as something outside of us and imposed upon us. She states,

Every time we speak of the "institution" as other than "us," we disavow our role in the creation and perpetuation of its conditions. We avoid responsibility for, or action against, the everyday complicities, compromises, and censorship – above all, self-censorship-which are driven by our own interests in the field and the benefits we derive from it.<sup>386</sup>

Artists, and institutions themselves are therefore left with a requirement to respond strategically to the changing circumstances in which critical practices are institutionally demarcated. What is essential for contemporary critical practices, however, is that artists address the changing discursive frameworks from within which artistic production and display are demarcated as such, in order to uncover and address the ideologies invested in these frameworks and the interests that they serve.

One such framework is the architectural backdrop of the host institution against which the artist's intervention is demarcated as an object of display. Thus, the question put and addressed by Asher since the late 1960s, of how the gallery space shapes the conditions under which the production and reception of art function, remains a pressing

---

<sup>383</sup> Fraser, 2005, p. 278.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., p. 284.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., p. 286.



question. In 1975, Daniel Buren outlined the relation between art practice and architecture as being one of 'Tension-crisis'.<sup>387</sup> Buren says,

It seems to me that it is much more a matter of showing what a work will imply immediately in a given place, and perhaps, thanks finally to the work, what the place will imply. The crisis between the function of the museum (architecture) and that of the art (visual object) will appear dialectically from the tension thus created.<sup>388</sup>

In Buren's theorisation, the site and work reciprocally frame one another, allowing the work to draw out qualities inherent to the site, and the site to draw out qualities inherent to the work. As we have seen with examples of institutional critique from the 1990s, the institutional site continues to set parameters for critical practice, defining the terms upon which the intervention is produced as well as integrating the critique with the priorities of institutions themselves in ways that reflect the developing service sector. Invariably the institution continues to be embodied within a material framework of display, the setting into which critiques of such art institutions as also received. Thus the gallery space continues to be an inescapable problematic for critical practitioners. Yet in ways that reflect the changes in critical practice we have examined, the apparatus of display itself has undergone a series of transformations since the time of Buren's commentary, generating a changed setting for critical practices to interrogate.

## 5. The Late-Capitalist Art Museum

In her essay 'The Exhibited Redistributed: A Case for Reassessing Space', art historian Reesa Greenberg describes 'a paradigm shift in the types of spaces used for exhibitions of contemporary art which can be characterised as a move away from domestic-like structures to buildings associated with commerce and industry'.<sup>389</sup> Since *Artforum's*

---

<sup>387</sup> Daniel Buren, 'Function of Architecture: Notes on work in connection with the places where it is installed taken between 1967 and 1975, some of which are specially summarised here', *Studio International* (Sept-Oct 1975). Reprinted in Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne, 1996, pp. 313-319, p. 315.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid., p. 315.

<sup>389</sup> Reesa Greenberg, 'The Exhibited Redistributed: A Case for Reassessing Space', in Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne, 1996, pp. 349-367, p. 350.

publication of O'Doherty's 'white cube' essays in 1976, the conventions that he theorised



have recurred in new fusions with industrial architecture (Tate Liverpool (1988), the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (1999)), and have been blown-up to form



cavernous exhibition halls in new museums (Bilbao Guggenheim (1997)).

In the early 1970s, former industrial sites in New York started to be transformed into 'alternative spaces'. 112 Greene St (Fig. 38) and The Kitchen Center both opened in 1971, and in 1976 the Institute for Urban Resources opened P.S.1. in a vacant school premises in Queens. These institutions nominated former industrial sites as exhibition spaces, allowing predominantly video, performance and installation artists to respond directly to their architecture. Recounting his involvement in 'Rooms' at P.S.1. Brian O'Doherty says,

There were layers upon layers of ugly green and ochre paint on the walls and the cries and screams of children were still echoing in the empty rooms. Making art in a completely untransformed building was in many ways more exciting and more interesting than when the building was rehabilitated.<sup>390</sup>

Subsequently, institutions based in former industrial sites utilised white cube conventions to produce settings that were more immediately recognisable as art galleries, whilst indicators of informality, such as concrete flooring, were redeployed within private galleries such as Marion Goodman (1977). Finally, the 'downtown' look reached the art museum itself in the 1980s with the 1983 rehousing of the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York within the Astor Building on Broadway (Fig. 39), and James Stirling's 1988 conversion of an Albert Dock warehouse into Tate Liverpool.<sup>391</sup> This British example fused a commercial storage space with white cube conventions to create what Tate themselves describe as 'an arrangement of simple, elegant galleries suitable for the display of modern art.'<sup>392</sup> The capacity of these conventions to mobilise sites in this manner attests to how conventions, the significance of which was originally mutable and had to be negotiated in relation to displays of high modernist art, now reappear as a way of dressing former industrial sites as signifiers of emptiness and silent contemplation. As we saw with Fraser's performance, *Museum Highlights* (1989), in the field of architecture, a rhetorical construct is appropriated and performed – though this time we are in the field of architecture, and we are concerned with the recurrence and displacement of white cube conventions within a site the original function of which falls outside the field of artistic display. The outcome of these architectural makeovers is that the atmosphere of vacancy and abandonment in the original site is transformed into the studied emptiness of white cube galleries themselves. Such projects demonstrate that white cube conventions have become a repeatable language of display, suited to the conversion of an array of architectural settings, bringing about an increased integration of sites of artistic display with urban

<sup>390</sup> Brian O'Doherty, Mark Godfrey and Rosie Bennett, 'Public Spectacle', *Frieze*, 80 (Jan-Feb 2004).

<sup>391</sup> Reesa Greenberg, 1996, p. 356. Greenberg gives the example of the Andy Warhol Museum in Philadelphia, which was opened in 1994 in a converted warehouse.

<sup>392</sup> Archive Journeys/Tate Liverpool/The Architecture, [http://www2.tate.org.uk/archivejourneys/historyhtml/bld\\_liv\\_architecture.htm/](http://www2.tate.org.uk/archivejourneys/historyhtml/bld_liv_architecture.htm/), [accessed, 01 August 2013].

space and fusing the production of display spaces with wider imperatives of regeneration.<sup>393</sup>

Fig. 38, 112 Greene St, front entrance, circa 1970.

Fig. 39, a contemporary image of the exhibition spaces within Marion Goodman Gallery. This site, on West 57<sup>th</sup> Street in New York, opened in 1981.

Another setting for artistic display developed in the 1990s was the emergence of enormous new branches of international museum brands; grandiose architectural gestures capable of overwhelming individual visitors. Jed Perl comments 'You do not go to the [new] museum to look at things, you go to be enveloped by a mood, an ambiance, a scene'.<sup>394</sup> Frank Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim (1997) possesses a flowing and folding exterior and interior structure and features a cavernous central exhibition hall that Hal

<sup>393</sup> In his account of the planning and development of Tate Liverpool, Frances Spalding recounts, 'In the summer of 1981 the Toxteth riots played a part in making a Liverpool outpost feasible, as they shook the government and secured the Merseyside Development Corporation's sense of purpose. The riots had not been the result of unemployment in Liverpool, though this was clearly a factor, but of the ultimate collapse in relations between the police and mainly black residents of Toxteth, who were sick of what seemed to be officially tolerated harassment. A chain of events was set in motion which began with the appointment of Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State for the Environment, as Minister for Merseyside, with the instruction to offer a 'package' to help the city. [Alan] Bowness, then Director of the Tate, seized the opportunity to approach Heseltine with Lord Hutchinson... They spoke for ten minutes and Heseltine pronounced the Tate Liverpool a wonderful idea.' Frances Spalding, *The Tate: A History* (London: Tate Publishing, 1998).

<sup>394</sup> Jed Perl, 'Welcome to the Funhouse: Tate Modern and the Crisis of the Museum', *New Republic*, June 19 (2000), p. 31.

Foster argues invokes a 'strained disorientation' in a way that seems to take Fredric Jameson's critique of 'delirious space in postmodern architecture [...] as a guideline for practice.'<sup>395</sup> By blowing-up the domestic scale of galleries that Asher intervened within at the Museum of Modern Art New York, Gehry also transforms the quality of the encounter with displays inside. Whilst Goodwin's galleries produced spaces of private communion with artworks, Gehry's hall, which features similarly outsize sculptures by the likes of Richard Serra, aims to overwhelm with scale. Foster's reading is consistent with Jameson's analysis of postmodern architecture in his essay 'Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism'. Jameson links disorientation within architectural space which he describes as the destabilisation of the 'individual human body's [ability] to locate itself, to organise its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position within a mappable external world'. He considers such encounters to be paradigmatic of the unending instabilities of production, movement, and exchange through which meaning and value are negotiated under flexible accumulation; an emblem of the 'decentered global network of the third stage of capitalism itself.'<sup>396</sup>

Borrowing from Jameson's title, Rosalind E. Krauss refers to spaces like Guggenheim Bilbao as 'late capitalist museums'.<sup>397</sup> She considers these spaces to be 'grandiloquent but somehow no longer masterable by the subject, seeming to surpass the reach of understanding like an inscrutable emblem of the multi-national infrastructure of information technology or of capital transfer.'<sup>398</sup> Krauss revisits the continuum of encounter in relation to which minimalist installation was theorised – that in which Morris argued that the dynamics of embodied perception is framed as the ground of experience. Krauss considers how an expanded framework of display might push these conditions of experience towards fragmentation. She notes,

[T]he Minimalist subject of 'lived bodily experience' – unballasted by past knowledge and coalescing in the very moment of its encounter with the object – could, if pushed just a little farther, break up entirely into the utterly

---

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>396</sup> Jameson gives the example of John Portman's Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles. It is noteworthy that both Jameson's and Foster's examples can be seen to belong to the service sector described by Harvey and Lazzarato. See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso Books, 1992).

<sup>397</sup> Rosalind Krauss, 'The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum', *October*, 54 (Fall 1990).

<sup>398</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

To articulate this point Krauss draws upon her experience of interviewing Thomas Krens, founder of the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, an art museum housed in a series of converted factory spaces in the city of North Adams. Recalling Tony Smith's description of driving down the New Jersey Turnpike that Michael Fried drew upon as an example of theatricality in 'Art and Objecthood', Krauss describes how, when driving down the autobahn, having just left a gallery in a converted factory, Krens thought about both how minimalism had changed the expectations of viewers of art in the late twentieth century, and how these changed expectations needed to be met by a transformation of conditions of display. The curatorial model he proposed for Mass MoCA rejected historical survey and developed expansive galleries that offered focused engagement with individual bodies of work (Fig. 40). There, the sequence of historical time represented through displays within the art museum collapses into 'an intensity of experience [...] that is not so much temporal (historical) as it is now radically spatial'.<sup>400</sup>

Krauss argues that this expansion of the field of artistic display accompanies the commercialisation of artistic reception. Noting her surprise at how Krens referred to museum activities like mounting exhibitions and producing catalogues as 'product', she concludes that, as with any other industry art world expansion and promotion, requires 'a larger and larger surface over which to sell the product in order to increase what Krens himself speaks of as market share'.<sup>401</sup> Writing in 1990, Krauss's comments anticipated the impact that the new Guggenheim would have, seven years later, upon the ailing port city of Bilbao on Spain's north coast. 450,000 visitors were projected for the first year, and nearly one and a half million actually turned up. This generated 137 million pounds in local revenue, leading an array of hotels, restaurants and shops to open nearby – an impact that McLellan claims inspired efforts to replicate this success around the world, the so-called 'Bilbao effect'.<sup>402</sup> Gerhy's museum is one of many examples of a series of museum expansion programmes in which leading architects – Zaha Hadid, Daniel Libeskind, and Herzog and de Meuron – have been commissioned

---

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>402</sup> McClellan cites Santiago Calatrava's Milwaukee Art Museum and Daniel Libeskind's extension of the Denver Art Museum as examples. McClellan, 2008, pp. 53, 91-92.

to produce new branches for existing art institutions. Writing in *ARTnews* in 2001, Blake Eskin described this museum boom as 'a multibillion dollar effort, a sustained growth spurt the likes of which the artworld has never seen'.<sup>403</sup> Statements issued in support of these projects prove Krauss's hypothesis. When the Mayor of Denver announced that Daniel Libeskind had been commissioned to build a new wing of the Denver Art Museum, his rationale for the project was that the expansion would put the city 'on the map as a world class destination'.<sup>404</sup> Thus, Krauss argues, the relation between the 1990s boom in museum expansion and the shift from Fordism to flexible accumulation is explicit. Following Fraser's analysis, museum display might then be thought of as yet another service industry. Krauss uses Ernst Mandel's definition of late capitalism to substantiate this shift. Mandel says,

Far from representing a "post-industrial society", late capitalism thus constitutes generalised universal industrialisation for the first time in history.

Mechanisation, standardisation, over-specialisation and parcellization of labour, which in the past determined only the realm of commodity production in actual industry, now penetrate all sectors of social life.<sup>405</sup>

Recurrence and displacement at the level of architectural production and encounter are the key drivers of the late-capitalist museum. Within the display halls of the Guggenheim Bilbao, one can sense the echo of a convention belonging to another era that has been expanded and twisted into a curvilinear form: white cube conventions read through the economic demands of late capitalism. The institution of art has been reproduced and expanded; it colonises an increasing quota of architectural space, as white cube conventions recur in and fuse with a plethora of architectural sites throughout the social formation. The result is the reproduction of the social apparatus of artistic display as a repetition and displacement of models of display that developed as early as 1939.<sup>406</sup> I will now go on to examine forms of relational installation that responded to this expanding framework of display in the 1990s before considering

<sup>403</sup> Blake Eskin, 'The Incredible Growing Art Museum', *ARTnews* 100 (October 2001), p. 138.

<sup>404</sup> B.S.M., 'Darling of the Architectural Avant-Garde for U.S. Designs Museum', *Art Newspaper* (November 2000), p. 18.

<sup>405</sup> Ernst Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1978), p. 387. Cited in Krauss, 1990, pp. 14-15.

<sup>406</sup> 1939 was the year of the opening of Philip L. Goodwin's Museum of Modern Art in New York. McClellan, 2008, pp. 76-77.

claims made within debates staged on the pages of journals such as *Third Text* by critics such as John Roberts that the challenge now facing critical art practitioners within this expanding field is to recreate spaces of effective critique in sites of artistic display produced through the recurrence and displacement of historical conventions in relation to increasingly commercialised imperatives.



Fig. 40, The interior galleries of the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, Building 5 gallery, February 1999

## 6. Relational Practice

The curator Nicolas Bourriaud theorised relational installations of the 1990s in his 1998 analysis, *Relational Aesthetics*, bringing the work of artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija, Phillipe Parreno, Carston Höller, Liam Gillick, Jorge Pardo and Felix Gonzalez-Torres under the same banner.<sup>407</sup> I have chosen 'relational installation' as a term of reference for the work of these artists though they might more typically be referred to as examples of relational aesthetics or relational art. I acknowledge Bourriaud's claim that the material form of the works he analyses in *Relational Aesthetics* issue from the 'bonds that link individuals together in social forms', yet, by using the term relational *installation*, I wish to emphasise how the gallery space frames the work and conditions its reception.<sup>408</sup> The importance of the architectural context here links relational art to histories of architectural intervention and institutional critique, as discussed in Chapters One and Two, making my continued reference to installation, I believe, appropriate. Bourriaud

<sup>407</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, (Dijon: les presses du réel, 2002).

<sup>408</sup> Ibid., p. 18.



argues that art exhibitions offer 'the immediate possibility of discussion' and identifies relational installation with the re-staging within the gallery social practices that one would more generally find outside the gallery space; a proposal that I read as an attempt to mobilise the expanding field of artistic display to ends of conviviality and sociability that Bourriaud considers to be socially progressive.<sup>409</sup>

Liam Gillick argues that critical readings of Asher's installation practice were a key inspiration for relational installation. Gillick claims that Asher's focus on the gallery frame engaged visitors to his installations with a situation whose parameters they could not negotiate. 'Asher uses neither the artist nor the user of art as a subject, yet they are essential disinterested participants in the collapse, relapse and prolapse of the museum or site of authority in all of his work.'<sup>410</sup> Building upon Asher's reflexive focus upon the gallery and the different roles people perform within it, Gillick claims that Relational installations include gallery visitors as producers of exchanges within the gallery space. He refers to Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija's work *Untitled (Free)* at 303 Gallery in New York in 1992 – a piece that bears similarities to Asher's installation within the Claire Copley Gallery in 1974 (Fig. 41). Tiravanija shifted the storage and office aspects of the gallery from the backspace to the front gallery and used the back space to cook food for visitors to his exhibition. Gillick notes that Tiravanija 'colonised the core of the gallery structure and made it a site for free-exchange of ideas and a one-way exchange of food from artist to visitor'.<sup>411</sup> The work reprised Asher's critique of the private gallery as a bureaucratic and economic apparatus, whilst also introducing discourses of dining and hospitality into the space of artistic reception. Such an approach is cited by the Cuban artist Jorge Pardo as determining the development of his own methodology: 'Things really opened up when I started to think [that] I no longer had to think about the exhibition space as the threshold and the frame but rather as part of a larger circuitry of things.'<sup>412</sup>

---

<sup>409</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid..

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., pp. 70-71.

<sup>412</sup> 'Lane Relyea in conversation with Jorge Pardo', in Christina Végh, Lane Relyea, and Chris Kraus, *Jorge Pardo* (London: Phaidon, 2008), p. 13.



Fig. 41, Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Untitled (Free)* at 303 Gallery in New York, 1992

Relational installations can be seen in this respect to utilise the relative autonomy of the gallery space in order to re-stage modes of interaction drawn from the broader praxis of life and to therefore set these forms of 'sociability' and 'conviviality' apart from it. It is within these terms that Bourriaud identifies relational installation with a critique of the social practices of late capitalism that he believes have left us feeling like 'a society of extras.'<sup>413</sup> relational installation according to this reading can then be seen as a response to the forms of flexible accumulation and immaterial labour analysed by Lazzarato and Harvey that Bourriaud describes as having formed a 'world governed by the division of labour and ultraspecialisation, mechanisation and the law of profitability'.<sup>414</sup> Bourriaud's conception of relational installation condenses Meyer's notion of the functional site into a network of social exchanges within the gallery space, which he describes by drawing upon Marx's term *the interstice*:

The interstice is a space of human relations which fits more or less harmoniously and openly into the overall system, but suggests other trading possibilities than those in effect within this system. This is the precise nature of the contemporary art exhibition in the arena of representational commerce: it creates free areas, and time spans whose rhythm contrasts with those structuring everyday life, and it encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the "communication

<sup>413</sup> Bourriaud, 1998, p. 9.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid..

zones” that are imposed upon us.<sup>415</sup>

Marx uses this term in *Capital* to describe trading communities within which 'the transformation of the product into a commodity, and therefore men's existence as producers of commodities, plays a subordinate role'.<sup>416</sup> Bourriaud claims that working in such close proximity to existing forms of social production determines 'not only an ideological and practical arena, but new formal fields as well', adding that 'the figures of reference of the sphere of human relations have now become fully fledged artistic forms'.<sup>417</sup>

In 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', Claire Bishop senses the presence of Althusser in the background of Bourriaud's argument. She claims 'Bourriaud's defence of relational aesthetics is indebted to Althusser's idea that culture – "as an ideological state apparatus" – does not *reflect* society, but produces it'.<sup>418</sup> Drawing upon analysis undertaken by Rosalind Deutsche in her book *Evictions*, Bishop identifies relational installation as a step along the path first initiated by minimalism's critique of high modernist medium-specificity that, as we have seen throughout this study, has led numerous practitioners into critical engagements with socio-linguistic contexts.<sup>419</sup> With relational installations, forms of social interaction and contexts of artistic display are appropriated and recombined through processes of displacement and recurrence as forms of art that produce their own social relations. They operate as part of the ideological state apparatus that 'function[s] on the basis of reproduction' and contributes towards the 'Reproduction of the Means of Production'.<sup>420</sup>

Relational art's capacity to enact a critique of social dynamics, as explicated by Bourriaud, is the focus of Stewart Martin's 'Critique of Relational Aesthetics', published in *Third Text* in 2007. Martin claims that the intention of relational practitioners according to Bourriaud is to lift the social relations between people out of their investment in commodity production and exchange, thus rendering them autonomous.

---

<sup>415</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>416</sup> Marx, 1976, p. 172.

<sup>417</sup> Bourriaud, 1998, p. 28.

<sup>418</sup> Claire Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October*, 110 (Autumn 2004), 51-79, p. 67.

<sup>419</sup> Rosalind Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1996).

<sup>420</sup> Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in Althusser, 2008, pp. 2, 10.

Yet, to achieve this, the work must also hold out against the commercial and/or institutional imperatives of its host gallery or museum.

But the question remains of how this autonomy is to be achieved, how it disengages from capitalist exchange relations that, Bourriaud does not deny, broadly encompass relational art. In other words, the issue is the nature of relational art's immanent critique of capitalist exchange.<sup>421</sup>

The function of the apparatus of display is vital in this regard. In the words of Gabriel Orozco, an artist that Bourriaud name-checks in *Relational Aesthetics*<sup>422</sup>, '[t]he moment you enter the gallery you are entering the realm of illusion. You enter a white screen and there you are ready to see art.'<sup>423</sup> The gallery frame here serves as a marker of differentiation between social interactions within society at large and those that shape these informally structured installations. One might speculate about what would happen if these forms of sociability were taken back outside the gallery, but I argue, rather, that relational installation has formed into a recognisable set of procedures that might be re-staged in any social space and still operate under the sign of art. Sharing the same characteristics of flow and exchange as the capitalist praxis they seek to critique, relational installations mobilise the gallery, but do not necessarily make critical reference to it. Indeed, Martin goes on to argue that relational installations extend the form of theatricality that Michael Fried first attributed to minimalist installation:

*Relational Aesthetics* is a new theory of art's theatricality, affirming it and radicalising its consequences. Bourriaud sees relational art as generating an inter-subjective space that not only incorporates the beholder, but also reduces the art object to this incorporation in ways that exceed Minimalism's persistent interest in the object.<sup>424</sup>

Artworks that seek to produce social critique need to address the conditions under which the critique itself is institutionally sanctioned. In this sense the forms of allegorical reading that I examined in Chapter Two, which loop back onto the context in

<sup>421</sup> Stewart Martin, 'Critique of Relational Aesthetics', *Third Text*, 21:4 ( July 2007), 369-386, p. 377.

<sup>422</sup> Bourriaud, 1998, pp. 17, 58.

<sup>423</sup> Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Briony Fer, Gabriel Orozco, and Ann Temkin, *Gabriel Orozco* (New York: MoMA New York, 2009), p. 82.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 383.

the form of a question, remain a key operation for critical practice. In contrast, the commitment to social interchange that structures projects such as Tiravanija's privileges production over interpretation. Without a reflection upon the role of the museum/gallery, there is a danger that the sociability the work facilitates will merely be consumed by the audience. Making reference to Jerry Saltz's account of his experience within Tiravanija's *Untitled (Free)* in 1992, Claire Bishop goes on to argue this point in her *October* article. Saltz recounts,

At 303 Gallery I regularly sat with or was joined by a stranger, and it was nice. The gallery became a place for sharing, jocularly and frank talk. I had an amazing run of meals with art dealers. Once I ate with Paula Cooper who recounted a long, complicated bit of professional gossip. Another day, Lisa Spellman related in hilarious detail a story of intrigue about a fellow dealer trying to woo one of her artists.<sup>425</sup>

Bishop's response is to highlight the mismatch between the democratic potential that Bourriaud identifies with the interstice and the art world gossip that Tiravanija's installation apparently supports.<sup>426</sup> This point was reinforced by Walaed Beshty's 2005 *Texte Zur Kunst* article, 'Neo-Avantgarde And Service Industry: Notes on the Brave New World of Relational Aesthetics', in which he recounts the procession of celebrities who attended Tiravanija's 2005 exhibition in London's Serpentine Gallery. 'Instead of creating a new zone of interactivity, the social divisions are re-enacted in heightened spectacle: the subjects sit back and watch the glamorous.'<sup>427</sup>

Furthermore, there is a danger that the forms of sociability Bourriaud describes can break down in contradiction and set up predetermined parameters of interaction. David Beech explains:

[T]he participant is typically not cast as the agent of critique or subversion but rather as one who is invited to accept the parameters of the art project. To participate in an art event whether it is organised by Rirkrit Tiravanija, or Jeremy

<sup>425</sup> Jerry Saltz, 'A Short History of Rirkrit Tiravanija', *Art in America* (February 1996), p. 107.

<sup>426</sup> Bishop, 2004, p. 67.

<sup>427</sup> Walaed Beshty, 'Neo-Avantgarde And Service Industry: Notes on the Brave New World of Relational Aesthetics', *Texte Zur Kunst*, Issue 59 (September 2005). <http://www.textezurkunst.de/59/neo-avantgarde-and-service-industry/> [Date accessed, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013].

Deller, Santiago Sierra or Johanna Billing, is to enter into a pre-established social environment that casts the participant in a very specific role.<sup>428</sup>

John Roberts, who identifies relational installation with a 'commitment to the multiple, temporal, unstable interactive space of the extra-gallery or gallery installation', considers that such an approach might 'bring with it a loss of knowledge derived from what we might call *corrective distance*'.<sup>429</sup> Roberts identifies such forms of knowledge as issuing from a theoretical encounter with 'the subject's objective place in the social totality'.<sup>430</sup> It is precisely this model of reflection that critical interventions by practitioners such as Asher, Buren and Haacke sought to initiate in relation to white cube conventions in the late 1960s; a model of allegorical reading of architectural structure theorised by Owens in terms of the palimpsest. I contend that it is within the processes of social production in which relational installation operates that the kinds of critical reflexive reading Owens argued in favour of can be re-deployed.<sup>431</sup>

## 7. Recursion and the Return of the Medium

Roberts' proposal of a re-development of corrective distance is echoed in Beshty's

---

<sup>428</sup> Beech, 2008, p. 3.

<sup>429</sup> John Roberts, 'Art, 'Enclave Theory' and the Communist Imaginary', *Third Text*, 21:4 (July 2007), 369-386, p. 376.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 377.

<sup>431</sup> Paul Pfeiffer's video installation *The Saints* (2007) that was staged in a vacant warehouse in close proximity to the newly re-designed Wembley Stadium is an example of such an installation. The work re-staged England's 1966 world cup final against Germany showing a crowd of Filipinos in Manila responding to video footage of the match as if they were in the crowd at Wembley Stadium. The work appropriates and re-stages this pivotal event in the production of England's national identity. The use of video and volunteer actors shows how representations of this event and its continual re-animation within social practices (discussions of sport and national identity) have allowed it to pass into British Folklore. The artist's re-staging of the event in Manila, and use of local people as respondents to the footage also comments on patterns of immigrant labour between Britain and The Philippines.

observation that, whilst relational practitioners and practitioners of institutional critique both adopt roles in the realisation of their project, 'the Relational Aesthetics programs simply adopt these roles, they do not reflexively dismantle them.'<sup>432</sup> Whilst Asher takes on the role of exhibition designer in order to critically dismantle the gallery as an institution of ideology, Tiravanija takes on the role of the caterer in order to bring an alternate function to the gallery space. The capacity for art to recover its critical value doesn't lie in the modes of recurrence and displacement within the abstracting context of the gallery space that structure relational installation. Instead, they lie in the capacity inherent in the social materiality of the gallery space: a set of residual functions left over from high modernism and minimalism, an architectural production of distance from the social, a space that, as we have seen throughout this chapter, has progressively been eroded through the mediation of the display environment and critical practice by forms of flexible accumulation and immaterial labour. A similar argument is put forth by David Beech, who suggests that the notion of autonomy ought to be reformulated: 'Autonomy, at least in today's circumstances, [...] involves public debates setting limits and reversing the effects of capital and administration'.<sup>433</sup> Considering how sites of autonomy can be spatially demarcated Beech considers that the sites of resistance can be varied – a magazine or a railway station, for example – yet he also reads O'Doherty's *Inside The White Cube* as conveying

art's fledgling autonomy that does not bring about apartness. [...] O'Doherty's account can be taken to show that the development of autonomous art was not primarily a reductive retreat into an aesthetic world apart. On the contrary, art's modern autonomy called up an expansive process in which its inherited limits had to be transgressed again and again in order to take issue with, take responsibility for and take control of all those seemingly external forces (the hang, the space, the institution, the economy and so on) that impinged on or interfered with art practice.<sup>434</sup>

In a context where the social apparatus of artistic display appears, as we have seen, to be

---

<sup>432</sup> Walaed Beshty, 2005.

<sup>433</sup> David Beech, 'Autonomy v Barbarism', *Art Monthly*, 309 (Sept 2007), p. 3

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

in a process of perpetual expansion, an ever-increasing array of social spaces are now being transformed into arenas of emptiness. They can, I argue, be appropriated for the purposes of the kinds of autonomous thought and action that Beech describes. Indeed, I argue that the gallery space, throughout the history of modern art, issuing from an apparent need to separate art from life, can be understood as our society's attempt to lift itself out of instrumentality and economic exchange relations. It is a social production of distance – a distance that can be made, through modes of artistic intervention into a critical distance.

Relational art functions as a point of comparison in my argument for modes of practice that appropriate and critically examine the material and social reproduction of ideology through a set of procedures developed by Rosalind E. Krauss out of her earlier reading of critical postmodernism and for the forms of allegory theorised by Craig Owens. The gallery space remains, on Krauss's reading, one such site in which ideology is reproduced. Yet in a manner that captures the drive of Michael Asher's practice, she describes how an artist might intervene within the environment of the white cube gallery turning its function towards critique and using it as a 'kicking post against which to propel himself in a new direction'.<sup>435</sup> The artist's appropriation of a material context or a given social framework as a support for the production of the work makes the practitioner's response to the support's attributes and functions an inherent aspect of the work's production. If the artist chooses through their productive acts to interrogate the attributes and functions of the material support, for example the gallery space itself, the work's realisation can result in the construction of critical distance. In contrast, then, she frames relational installation in terms of the flow of social production – the recurrence and displacement of social forms – citing Bourriaud's claim that 'the liveliest factor that is played out on the chessboard of art has to do with interactive, user friendly concepts, and relational concepts'.<sup>436</sup> In this context (the 'chessboard of art'), she uses the 'knight's move', developed by the formalist literary critic Viktor Shklovsky in 1923, as a way of setting up the procedures through which her own re-construction of the medium functions. According to Shklovsky,

[t]here are many reasons for the strangeness of the knight's move, the main one

<sup>435</sup> Rosalind E. Krauss, *Under Blue Cup* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 2011), p. 25.

<sup>436</sup> Bourriaud, 1998, p. 7.



being the conventionality of art [...]. The second lies in the fact that the knight is not free – it moves in an L-shaped manner because it is forbidden to take the straight road.<sup>437</sup>

Convention shapes the movements of the knight in a game of chess in the same way that convention shapes the production methods of art and, as we saw with the example of *Aspen 5+6*, the conventions of ordering and framing empty space within the gallery.

In tandem with her close attention to the conventions that shape artistic production, display and reception, over the last fifteen years, Krauss has been sharply critical of forms of installation, such as relational art, that use the gallery space in order to stage materials and practices drawn from the arenas of life as art. In 1999, she referred to practices that rely upon the delineating function of the gallery space as 'a problematic aftermath' of critical postmodernism.<sup>438</sup> In 2008, she criticised the 'now-fashionable possibility of installation art', because it is 'relentless in its refusal of specificity, filling galleries with mixtures of video images and taped narratives'.<sup>439</sup> Krauss claims that such works occupy 'the post-medium condition', in which attacks on medium-specificity directed at high modernist criticism in the 1960s and 1970s have turned into a 'kind of official position', a residual rationale for the continued uncritical diversification and hybridisation of artistic practice.<sup>440</sup> In contrast, the position that Krauss has continued to develop since the turn of the century attempts to re-formulate questions of specificity in a manner that critically engages ever-proliferating patterns of exchange and representation that, in turn, formulate the material contexts of late-capitalist societies. Krauss's position displays similarities to Craig Owens' 1983 analysis of postmodern allegory. The reflexivity that was pivotal to Owens' position has, in Krauss's recent writing, developed into a model of recursivity, a critical manoeuvre that has enabled her to recover a notion of the medium in the context of contemporary practice; a manoeuvre that, as we saw in Chapter Two, was already set up in Krauss's 1978 essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field'. Her model of recursivity functions in stark contrast to the processes of recurrence and displacement through which we have

<sup>437</sup> Viktor Shklovsky, *Knights Move*, trans. by Richard Sheldon (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005), p. 3.

<sup>438</sup> Krauss, 2000, p. 7.

<sup>439</sup> Rosalind E. Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 2010), p. xiii.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

considered the expansion of the apparatus of display and the procedures of relational art – which we have also linked to the structural processes through which the social formation reproduces itself. Reading Althusser, Stuart Hall effectively narrates this process drawing a contrast between the terms *structure* and *practice* in ways that are useful to our discussion:

We may say that a structure is what previously structured practices have produced as a result. These then constitute the “given conditions,” the necessary starting point, for new generations of practice. In neither case should “practice be treated as transparently intentional: we make history, but on the basis of anterior conditions which are not of our making. Practice is how structure is actively reproduced. Nevertheless, we need both terms if we are to avoid the trap of treating history as nothing but the outcome of an internally self-propelling structuralist machine.”<sup>441</sup>

Hall's description of practice leaves space for the kinds of critical, argumentative readings to which Foster, as well as figures such as Althusser and de Man offer support. Revisiting a line of argument set up in the introduction to Volume One of this project, I argue that such readings correspond with Althusser's notion of symptomatic readings of a given social formations structure. I believe that Krauss's model of recursivity functions in a similar manner in the context of art practice. Symptomatic reading, as the seeking out of contradictions within social contexts functions in a similar manner to the ways in which the gallery space has been historically mobilised by practitioners of institutional critique, as the technical support for intervention within conventions of artistic display. I contend that in her recourse to the notion of recursivity, Krauss is engaged with thinking about how critical distance from such anterior conditions might be manufactured. She draws the term from the context of high modernist criticism in which art's 'pointing to itself' became synonymous with medium-specificity - the idea that the work advances to the viewer the nature of the medium – and it is this dimension of recurrence that Krauss draws upon. She describes a recursive structure as a 'layered, complex relationship [...] a structure, that is, some of the elements of which will

---

<sup>441</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser, and the Post-Structuralist Debates', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 2:2 (June 1985).

produce the rules that generate the structure itself'.<sup>442</sup> Asher's procedure of architectural displacement possesses such a recursive dimension. Each work I have considered is determined by an existing material configuration of the site; a particular realisation of white cube conventions in practice that is interrogated by the artist's intervention. The artist's role here is that of the scriptor, as outlined by Roland Barthes (see Chapter Two), who 'traces a field [whose origin is] language itself', resulting in a reading of the site, the criticality of which rests on revealing the contradictions within it.<sup>443</sup> In this sense, white cube conventions themselves, and the ways in which they shape specific gallery spaces, function as a technical support for the production of the work as a critical reading of the site's ideological construction.

The manner in which Krauss discusses the medium itself continues to draw connections with Althusser's understanding of the relation between social practice and the reproduction of ideology. As we saw in Chapter One, throughout the 1950s and 1960s the medium of painting was progressively constructed around a set of ideas – opticality, flatness, etc. – that Greenberg's historicist account retrospectively read into modernist art history. A lineage of continuity in development was constructed in such high modernist accounts that was supported, for example, by the curatorial practices of Alfred H. Barr, and William Rubin at the Museum of Modern Art New York. The repetition of these readings stabilised painting's norms in this way producing the paradigm of high modernism. In Krauss's terms, it was 'stabilised and reactivated' as a 'discursive unity'.<sup>444</sup> Thus a set of procedures through which canvas was marked with paint to a particular set of ends became synonymous with the medium of painting and notions of quality within that field. In order to avoid such Greenbergian norms Krauss re-conceptualises the notion of the medium around the idea of the 'technical support'.<sup>445</sup> Whilst Greenberg correlates artistic media with senses such as eyesight, the objects, contexts, behaviours, conventions, etc, Krauss claims that the objects, contexts or practices that artist's mobilise as technical supports for their work can be much more diverse and contingent entities. Nevertheless, like constructions of the medium within high modernist criticism, the technical support is a work's underpinning, the structure

---

<sup>442</sup> Krauss, 2000, pp. 6-7.

<sup>443</sup> Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *Aspen* 5+6, section 3.

<sup>444</sup> Krauss, 2011, p. 16.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid..

from which it issues. Krauss claims that a technical support could be the canvas support of a painting or an armature that supports clay sculpture, or it could be as informal as the found supports mobilised by Ed Ruscha, such as the transient contexts – petrol stations, swimming pools, car parks – distributed throughout American society.<sup>446</sup> Other examples Krauss cites are William Kentridge's use of projected animation in works such as *Monument* (1990), James Coleman's appropriation of commercial slide tape in works such as *INITIALS* (1993/4), and Christian Marclay's use of relations between sound and image in video in works such as *Video Quartet* (2002).<sup>447</sup> Following the line of argument developed throughout this dissertation, Krauss identifies the technical support as a contextually-determined construct that performs a given function and mediates social practices. This contrasts with the instantaneousness and finality of encounters with depicted shape, around which, as we have argued, Fried constructed his understanding of high modernism. Krauss claims that 'purity [of the medium] was always already invaded by an outside, indeed, could itself only be constituted through the introjection of that outside'.<sup>448</sup> Thus inherent within the work is a relation between the material structure taken as the technical support and the conventions through which it is structured, and the contextual relationships through which it is determined. Thus a recursive reading made through a technical support will mobilise or might critique the conventional logic, the procedures through which the support operates.<sup>449</sup> Krauss refers to a paradigmatic reading – for example, how the opposition of male and female can generate the paradigm of gender – as one such support, in a way that recalls the relation of syntagmatic and paradigmatic readings in the interpretations of the gallery space that we examined in Chapter Two.

To convey the sense of mobilisation/critique made through such works, Krauss

<sup>446</sup> 'A medium grounds an artistic production, and provides a set of rules for that production. It can be complicated even when it appears simple; a good example is Ed Ruscha's use of the automobile as a kind of medium – its a consistent support of his work. [...] At one point in his work Ruscha could use almost anything as a support for colour – like blueberry extract, chocolate sauce, axel grease, and cavier. What he did with this comestible mess was to do a portfolio of prints [...] titled stains, and those works hooked back into the history of stained painting – from Pollock through Frankenthaler.' Rosalind Krauss, 'The Predicament of Contemporary Art', in Hal Foster et al., eds., *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Anti-Modernism, Post Modernism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), p. 647.

<sup>447</sup> See (for Kentridge), Rosalind E. Krauss, "'The Rock': William Kentridge Drawings for Projection', in Krauss, 2010, pp. 55-88; (for Coleman) Krauss, 'And Then Turn Away: An Essay on James Coleman', *October*, 81 (Summer 1997), 5-33; (for Marclay) 'LipSync: Marclay Not Nauman', in Krauss, 2010, pp. 35-40.

<sup>448</sup> Krauss, 2000, p. 32.

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

references Viktor Shklovsky's notion of the 'knight's move', the L-shaped movements of which around the chessboard appear to foreground the conventions under which it operates. This example appears to dramatise both the conventionality of artistic media as they are reproduced through patterns of reactivation and Krauss's own reading of the technical support. In order to distance herself from the still dominant Greenbergian construction of the term 'medium', Krauss engages with Stanley Cavell's notion of the *automatum*, which she defines as 'the relation between a technical (or material) support and the conventions with which a particular genre operates or articulates or works on that support.'<sup>450</sup> Whilst Greenberg brings a sense of fixity to discussions of medium-specificity (we might recall his claim in 'Modernist Painting' that 'the unique and proper area of competence of each art coincided with all that was unique to the nature of the medium'<sup>451</sup>), Cavell's term invited the possibility of improvisation, in the sense that the appropriation or invention of a set of conventions is a part of the creation of the work. Criticising the basis of high modernist medium-specificity on the attributes of the human senses, as opposed to the socio-linguistic frameworks within which they are embedded, Cavell writes,

I characterised the task of the modern artist as one of creating not a new instance of his art but a new medium in it. One might think of this as the task of establishing a new automatism [...], A modernist art, investigating its own physical basis, searching out its own conditions of existence, rediscovers the fact that existence as an art is not physically assured. It gracefully accepts our condemnation to meaning – that for separate creatures of the sense and soul, for earthlings, meaning is a matter of expression; and that expressionlessness is not a reprieve from meaning, but a particular mode of it.<sup>452</sup>

Thus, for Krauss, the technical support appropriated or constructed in the development of an artist's project, serves as a means through which to invite a recursive reading of the socio-linguistic site (material or otherwise) of the work's production. The notion of the technical support that Krauss develops in relation to Cavell bears many similarities

---

<sup>450</sup> Krauss, 2011, p. 5.

<sup>451</sup> Greenberg, 1965, p. 194.

<sup>452</sup> Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 104.

to the notion of the functional site developed by Meyer; both may be the product of a networked interaction of contexts. Yet while the functional site may yield a reflexive reading, it may also, in failing to generate adequate critical distance, support the institutional contexts within which it operates. In contrast, I argue that the specifically recursive dimension of Krauss's theory invites a mode of encounter that uses the work to look back critically upon the context it borrows as its technical support. To support this contention I will now go on to consider two examples of projects that undertake recursive readings of specific gallery spaces, bringing critical attention to late-capitalist museum spaces.

## 8. 'Voids: A Retrospective'

'Voids: A Retrospective' was staged in the Centre Pompidou in Paris between 25<sup>th</sup> February and 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2009, and was exhibited again at the Kunsthalle Bern in Switzerland between 10<sup>th</sup> September and 11<sup>th</sup> October of the same year. The exhibition consisted of the chronological presentation of nine empty rooms that re-created works produced by artists who, at different historical moments, had nominated gallery spaces around the world as works of art. So, as one passed through the exhibition, one encountered *La Vide* by Yves Klein (1958); *The Air Conditioning Show* by Art & Language (1966-67); *'Some places to which we can come, for a while and think about what we are going to do' (Marcuse)* by Robert Barry (1979); *Experimental Situation* by Robert Irwin (1970); Laurie Parsons' installation at Lorence-Monk Gallery (1990); *Haus Esters Piece* by Bethan Huws (1993); *Money* by Maria Eichhorn (2001); and *More Silent than Ever* by Roman Ondák (2004). In the 'General Introduction' to the exhibition in the accompanying catalogue, the curatorial committee (John Armleder, Mathieu Copeland, Gustav Metzger, Mai-Thu Perret, and Clive Phillpot) claimed that '[t]he strategy for this exhibition, based on the constitution of a first inventory of exhibitions taking the void as their theme, was to select only the events where a totally empty space, museum, or gallery was shown.'<sup>453</sup> Whilst the retrospective's purpose was to exhibit these works together for the first time, I am going to develop an alternate

---

<sup>453</sup> John Armleder and others, eds. *Voids: A Retrospective* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2009), p. 29.

reading of the exhibition. I suggest that 'Voids: A Retrospective' can be understood as an exhibition of the empty galleries of the Pompidou Centre, through the nomination of these rooms as a range of artworks that at different historical moments exhibited empty gallery spaces (Fig. 42). Following this line of argument I will conclude re-staging of these works together can be engaged with as an allegorical reading of the socio-historical construction of the white cube gallery.

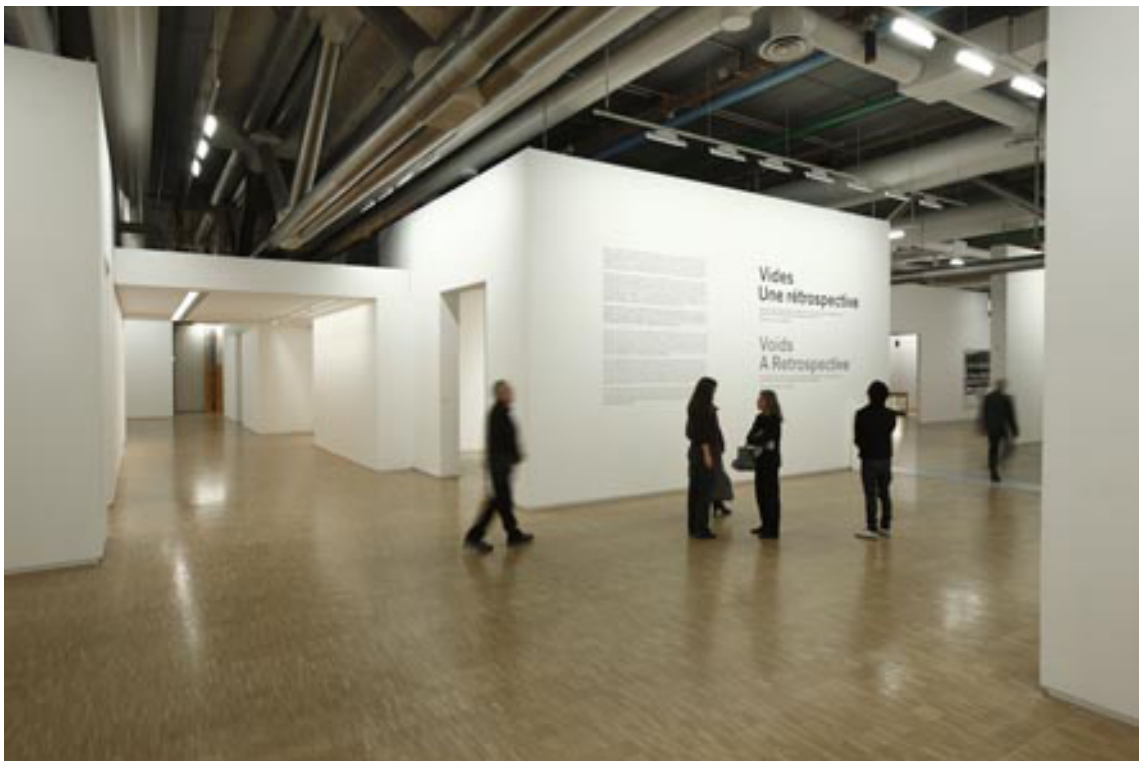


Fig. 42, 'Voids: A Retrospective', installation view, the Pompidou Centre, Paris, 2009

Nevertheless the curatorial committee's strategy was reflected in the exhibition's title, which asserted plainly the status of the exhibition, leaving visitors in no doubt that the succession of what Vivian Rehberg described in her review for *Frieze Magazine* as 'nine freshly whitewashed, empty galleries' were re-presentations of artworks produced at different times and in different places by different artists dealing with the subject of the void.<sup>454</sup> Retrospectives usually mark a culmination of an artist's mature body of work, and offer opportunities for the different moments in the development of his/her practice to be exhibited together; to title the exhibition in this manner, then, was to load

<sup>454</sup> Vivian Rehberg, 'Voids, A Retrospective', *Frieze*, 123, May 2009.  
[http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/voids\\_a\\_retrospective/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/voids_a_retrospective/) [Date accessed, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013].

it with a particular authority. A body of work developed around this theme and through a shared strategy was being presented here together for the first time. Yet what was on display did not, and could never, live up to the expectations that such a billing is likely to generate. One might expect forensic re-constructions of the original spaces so as to re-capture the diversity of the architecture or the unique atmosphere of each space. Several reviews of the exhibition latched upon the fact that the curators had not followed this strategy and used it as a criticism. Writing in *Art Monthly*, Anna Dezeuze claimed that '[w]hile "Voids" is certainly the "antiblockbuster" its curators intended, its ethical claims to a kind of "honesty" – in its refusal to introduce any form of historical documentation or props related to the original exhibitions – are more difficult to sustain'.<sup>455</sup> A radical disjuncture appeared to exist between how the exhibition was billed and what was presented to the audience. One might imagine how different the exhibition might have been if Dezeuze's vision had been imagined - if one had, for instance, entered the re-staged *La Vide* through a blue curtain at which Republican Guards were stationed. Instead of this, different galleries on the fourth floor of the museum were declared to be the various historical works by the labels appended to the walls outside. No adjustments were made to the Pompidou Centre's interior architecture in the recreation of the originals, a point on which the curators are explicit: 'There is [...] no intention to reconstitute the original sites of the works exhibited, no documentary endeavour, nor material authenticity in the presentation'.<sup>456</sup> The relation between the labelled spaces within the exhibition and the original works is therefore purely nominal. This point was drawn upon by Rehberg in her analysis of the exhibition in *Frieze*, where she emphasised that this nominal status was consistent with the original works.

Rather than reconstructing (which would be too akin to representing) the initial projects undertaken by these artists, "Voids" emphatically reasserts that conceptual and neo-conceptual art are not exclusively bound to any of their particular forms of materialization and therefore can logically inhabit any space whatsoever.<sup>457</sup>

<sup>455</sup> Anna Dezeuze, 'Voids: A Retrospective', *Art Monthly*, 326 (May 2009), p. 24.

<sup>456</sup> Armleder, 2009, p. 29.

<sup>457</sup> Vivian Rehberg, 'Voids, A Retrospective', *Frieze*, 123 (May 2009), available at [http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/voids\\_a\\_retrospective/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/voids_a_retrospective/) [accessed 26 August 2013].



Rehberg's reading correlates with the manner in which the re-fabrications of Donald Judd's and Carl Andre's works appeared to displace the site of the work's authority onto the plans from which both the originals and the re-fabrications were made. I argue, though, that something more complex in fact took place in the Pompidou Centre, and it is from here that I will start to develop the alternate reading I have outlined.

Firstly, we must remember we are dealing with post-studio practice: these works were works precisely because they were *exhibitions*. They came into existence through the nomination of the gallery space as an artwork, and so existed as art in the form of an exhibition. The same is true of their re-staging within the Pompidou Centre. Works that no longer had a material existence were presented together in the museum as part of a retrospective. In this sense, their existence as art hinged upon the manner in which the fourth floor galleries at the Pompidou Centre were mobilised as the site of this retrospective; specifically, through the declarations in the form of information sheets pasted to the walls. Thus visitors to the Pompidou Centre only encountered these historical works through the curators' act of nomination, and by entering and encountering the material structures. the galleries that they nominate (Fig. 43).



Fig. 43, 'Voids: a Retrospective', installation view showing two of the galleries nominated by the curators in the role of re-staging historical works that exhibited empty gallery spaces.

Secondly, we need to be attentive to the manner in which the original works now exist; that is, as documentary images and eye-witness testaments. This emphasises that the re-staging mobilises not the work itself, but the *memory* of the work materialised in available archival evidence (the exhibition catalogue is an excellent compendium of these documents), a memory that needs to be continually re-animated. Thus, the galleries in the Pompidou Centre re-animate a remembered notion of each of the original exhibitions.

Thirdly, because one only encounters the work through the Pompidou Centre galleries it is possible to imagine a reversal where the work is taken as vehicle through which the site is exhibited. Whilst reviews of the exhibition appear preoccupied with how the original artworks were re-created within the Pompidou Centre (which they do because their knowledge of art history has trained them to), I am more interested in how the retrospective opens up and invites audiences to engage with the architecture of the museum. One might object here that a diversity of intentions regarding the gallery space

are mobilised in the re-staging of these works, and that the way, for example, Yves Klein and Robert Irwin worked, did not yield a consistent mode of engagement with the gallery space. Analysing *La Vide*, for instance, O'Doherty claims 'the gallery primarily hosted a transcendent gesture.'<sup>458</sup> There is, of course, a diversity of intentions and handlings of the gallery space present within these historical projects, but these diversities are only materialised in the context of the exhibition through the different descriptions on the wall texts. The works are presented together as part of a standardised architectural/curatorial scheme, to which these historical projects and the oeuvres of the artists who produced them are reduced. Taken as a milieu, I want to suggest that what 'Voids: A Retrospective' creates is the kind of museum space that, as we noted in Chapter One, Robert Smithson anticipated in interview with Allan Kaprow: 'A museum devoted to different kinds of emptiness could be developed. The emptiness could be defined by the actual installation of art. Installations should empty rooms, not fill them.'<sup>459</sup> What my proposed reading of 'Voids: A Retrospective' creates are opportunities for specific engagement with the architecture of the site, the empty space within its walls, and the manner in which the wall labels inflect the various rooms with different constructions of emptiness issuing from histories of art practice. Documentary images of the exhibition draw attention to the clean uniformity of the walls inserted into the space, the modular formations constructed by them, and, stopping short of another layer of architecture, the air-conditioning pipes that the building's architects, Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers, exposed as part of the building's design.<sup>460</sup> Our attention is drawn to the still, empty spaces that white partitioning can construct (the white walls' residual capacity to screen activity and isolate space), and the dynamics of the life of the building foregrounded by the particular manner of its design. I argue that this conflation of stillness and movement from gallery space to gallery space is suggestive of Krens' motorway travel between art galleries made in former industrial sites, as narrated by

---

<sup>458</sup> O'Doherty, 1986, p 89.

<sup>459</sup> Robert Smithson, 'What is a Museum?' in Flam, 1996, pp. 43-44.

<sup>460</sup> Kenneth Frampton supports this analysis in his commentary on the design of the Pompidou Centre. 'In the first place, it is an outstanding popular success – as much for its sensational nature as anything else. In the second, it is a brilliant *tour de force* in advanced technique, looking for all the world like an oil refinery whose technology it seeks to emulate. It seems however, to have come into being with the minimum regard for the specificity of its brief – for the art and library holdings it was destined to house. It represents the design approach of indeterminacy and optimum flexibility taken to extremes.' Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), p. 285.

Krauss.

Fourthly, and finally, there is one further quality that is pivotal to this reading of the retrospective. I argue that the re-animation of historical exhibitions that no longer have a material existence and endure only in memory as supported by a material archive, through the architectural structure of the Pompidou Centre's galleries, can be said to allegorise the mode of existence of its own white cube galleries. Built in 1977, the Pompidou Centre is an early instance of the museum boom I discussed earlier in this chapter. Its gallery spaces did not derive their function from a direct relation to exhibits within the space, as was once the case with high modernism and minimalism. The production of the Pompidou Centre belongs to a subsequent moment in which white cube conventions could be assigned to a range of architectural settings because their function appeared to have stabilised around a general acceptance that they brought an atmosphere of emptiness appropriate to the display of art practices developed in the aftermath of minimalism. In the same way that the exhibits in 'Voids: A Retrospective' derived their status from exhibitions at prior historical moments, I argue, following the reading made by Krauss in her late-capitalist museum article, that the significance of the galleries themselves derives from the retrospective moment of minimalist installation. Thus I argue that 'Voids: A Retrospective' offers a recursive reading of the galleries within the Pompidou Centre. The re-staged exhibitions of empty galleries are a correlate of the way that the function of the white walls in the museum are constructed through borrowed significations. The exhibition, then, is a support, or, as Krauss might term it, the paradigm through which the museum itself can be read.

## **9. Michael Asher's Santa Monica Museum of Art Installation**

In keeping with his contractual stipulations of non-removal or duplication Michael Asher turned down a request to include his 1974 Nova Scotia College of Art and Design installation within 'Voids: A Retrospective', but did sanction the inclusion of documentation of the work as part of the exhibition catalogue. Nonetheless, Asher has examined the re-staging of architectural structures within his practice. Asher presented an installation at the Santa Monica Museum of Art in 2008 that specifically explored

processes of recurrence and displacement within the architectural history of the site.

In response to an invitation extended to him in 2001 by the Museum,<sup>461</sup> Asher developed an installation in which he reproduced every temporary wall that had been constructed in the museum's main gallery space since its move to the current Bergamot Station location – an arts complex based in a converted railroad station – in 1998. By mapping out where the steel support studs had been placed in the construction of each subsequent partition wall, and by marking out each of these points with a new temporary stud, Asher simultaneously re-staged each temporary exhibition space that had ever been constructed in that gallery (Fig.44). The result was a forest of steel supports, which, whilst precisely demarcating the architectural history of that space, also presented the viewer with a complex arrangement of interweaving spatial dividers. At the same time, in a gallery adjacent to the main area, he presented the floor plans for each of these past exhibitions, revealing the temporary walls as they once stood, show by show. Before one entered the installation, two further information boards listed the floor plans and the exhibitions to which these referred (Fig. 45).



Fig. 44, Michael Asher, *No Title*, installation at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, USA, 2008

<sup>461</sup> Elsa Longhauser discusses the background to Asher's installation in the foreword of the exhibition catalogue. See Mikon Kwon and Elsa Longhauser, *Michael Asher: Santa Monica Museum of Art* (Santa Monica: Santa Monica Museum of Art, 2008), p. 1.



Fig. 45, Michael Asher, *No Title*, installation at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, USA, 2008.

The information sheets and floor plans dealt with the museum's architectural history diachronically, whilst the installation of steel supports dealt with it synchronically. Standing in the larger exhibition surrounded by the steel structures, these historical reference points were obscured within the enclosing presence of the studding, a contrast that interested the artist.

[Y]ou can go back and forward between the small front room and the frames, and cross-reference what is in the show [...] I want to see if the viewer understands this as a sort of abstract sculpture made of frames or something very specific. I am interested in how the viewer's comprehension and experience change as they do that cross-referencing.<sup>462</sup>

The arrangement of studs lacked regularity and obscured lines of sight through the space, offering viewers radically different vistas of the installation as they moved through it. Mark Godfrey offers a first-hand account of the work:

Bars clattered you as you passed though the walls and when the space filled with people, they would seem to disappear and re-appear in distinct sections of the room. Sometimes you thought about imprisonment; but most of all there was

<sup>462</sup> Michael Asher quoted in Andrea Fraser, 'Procedural Matters: Andrea Fraser On The Art Of Michael Asher', *ArtForum* (Summer 2008), p. 377.

the illusion that you were walking through a hall of mirrors.<sup>463</sup>

The two contrasting systems of representation that structured the work exemplified George Kubler's claim that such encounters 'may be treated synchronously or diachronously, i.e., as events at rest in a cross-section of relationships or as events in duration, under unceasing change in motion and flow.'<sup>464</sup> Asher's installation physically articulated the historical fact of the museum's architecture, critically questioning the function of the white cube conventions that structured the museum's permanent architecture, which was originally developed to create, in the words of Brian O'Doherty, an 'eternity of display'.<sup>465</sup> As in the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, these conventions were introduced to introduce an atmosphere of silent contemplation into a building that was originally a transportation depot. Thus, Kwon notes that Asher 'underscores the transience of what commonly appears permanent and stable,<sup>466</sup> – i.e., the alleged de-contextualisation of the white cube gallery – 'including ultimately the institution of the museum itself.'<sup>467</sup> Viewers witnessed a pattern of recurrences and displacements through which this apparatus of display was continually renewed, exhibition after exhibition, fulfilling SMMoA's mission as a 'risk-taking, non-collecting museum'<sup>468</sup> that supports 'the art of our time through exhibitions and related programmes that embrace diverse aesthetic, cultural and ideological perspectives.'<sup>469</sup> By reconstructing all of the temporary architecture within the space, Asher materialised the historicity of the site's architecture as a continuum of structural variation within the exhibition space's rectilinear frame, like the characters in O'Doherty's *Structural Play*, who continually navigate their own grid.

Thus, whilst 'Voids: A Retrospective' emptied the fourth floor galleries of the Pompidou Centre by re-staging empty galleries as artworks, Asher's Santa Monica Museum of Art installation filled the museum's main exhibition space by re-staging

---

<sup>463</sup> Walead Beshty and Mark Godfrey, 'Parallax Views: Two comments on Michael Asher at the Santa Monica Museum of Art', *Text zur Kunst*, 70 (May 2008), p.173.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid..

<sup>465</sup> O'Doherty, 1986, p. 15.

<sup>466</sup> Miwon Kwon, 'Support and Decoration: Michael Asher's Critique of the Architecture of Display', in Kwon and Longhauser, 2008, p. 55.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid..

<sup>468</sup> 'Santa Monica Museum of Art: Mission and History', Santa Monica Museum of Art Website, <<http://smmaoa.org/index.php/about/mission>>, [accessed 10 August 2011]

<sup>469</sup> Ibid..

temporary architectural interventions. Each work, though, possessed the same silencing effect. Asher filled the Santa Monica Museum of Art with a thicket of mute architectural forms, the dull metallic surfaces of which offered a reminder of the site's industrial past, but which nonetheless here functioned as markers of spatial division, filling the space with what Susan Sontag terms 'silence as "plenitude"'. The work offered a recursive reading of the museum's recurrent action of re-constituting its main exhibition space as an empty receptacle of art, interposing the total sequence of components here in one simultaneous structure. In Krauss's terms, the plans from the museum's history served as a 'kicking post' for Asher to propel his analysis of the function of architectural structure within the Santa Monica Museum of Art.<sup>470</sup>

Asher, then, re-staged dismantled architectural components of the Santa Monica Museum of Art as a means of re-tracing and recuperating the history of the site. Yet, because these acts of recuperation were also compensatory in character, the retrieved or re-staged architectural constructs could only ever stand in for the actual structures that had already been demolished or had fallen into disuse.

In his own analysis of Asher's installation, Walead Beshty compares Asher's conflation of wall frames to Benjamin Buchloh's analysis of allegory, which Buchloh identified with 'appropriation and depletion of meaning, fragmentation, and dialectical juxtaposition of fragments [...] having the effect of ruins.'<sup>471</sup> Owens also identifies the ruin as an emblem of allegorical form, noting that, ruins 'stand for history as an irreversible process of dissolution and decay.'<sup>472</sup> I want to argue here that Asher's installation is an emblem of the problematic of critical distance that I have examined throughout this chapter. If, as I argued in relation to Beech, the white cube gallery might facilitate the kinds of individual reflection and autonomous social action that Beech himself seeks to promote, this will occur most effectively through critical recursive readings of these sites, rather than through the patterns of recurrence and displacement that structure relational installation. A critique of the institution of art continues to hold out the possibility, not only of turning the distancing effect of the gallery space towards the needs of individuals, but also of promoting negative readings of white cube

---

<sup>470</sup> Krauss, 2011, p. 25.

<sup>471</sup> Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art', *Artforum* (September 1982), p. 45.

<sup>472</sup> Owens, 1992, p. 102.



conventions as an ideological construction, creating contexts that allow, as Fredric Jameson notes, 'the possibility of the positioning of the cultural act outside of the massive Being of capital'.<sup>473</sup>

---

<sup>473</sup> Fredric Jameson, 1992, p. 48.

## Conclusion

This project has assessed the continuing relevance of practices of architectural intervention in the context of the twenty-first century by addressing the interaction of two traditions in the production and interrogation of artistic autonomy: institutional critique and the white cube gallery. Arguing that public presentations of art necessitate the nomination of a frame that constitutes a specific social arena of artistic display, I have focused upon practices that seek to expose the ideological construction of this border drawn between art and life; a field of critical intervention that, as we have seen, increasingly hinges as much on historical readings of its own social construction, as it does upon the spatial divisions drawn by the frame itself.

Chapter One introduced notions of autonomy and critique through consideration of Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, so as to foreground the emergence of Asher's interventionist practice as a critical response to displays of high modernist and minimalist exhibitions within white cube spaces. Focusing upon Michael Asher's installation within the exhibition 'Spaces' at the Museum of Modern Art New York (1969/70) and at Pomona College (1970), as well as Brian O'Doherty's 1976 theoretical critique of the gallery space, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, both Asher and O'Doherty's contributions were framed as critiques of the function of the gallery space as shaped in relation to exhibitions of high modernist and minimalist art. Asher's displacements of minimalist methodologies onto the gallery frame itself were considered in relation to Rosalind E. Krauss's essay, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' (1978), and Craig Owens theorisation of Postmodern allegory, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism' (1980). I concluded, in this chapter, that Asher's mode of practice could be understood through Krauss's notion of axiomatic structure and Owens' notion of the palimpsest. The commonality between these positions rested in the critics' understanding of architectural intervention as a critical reading of the gallery space; an interrogation of the principle functions that the gallery space appeared to perform.

In Chapter Two, I analysed the relation between architectural intervention and processes of critical interpretation, focusing upon Asher's intervention within Claire Copley Gallery (1974) in terms of the artist's critical gesture and the responses made by

critics and the gallerist herself. This chapter extended the study's analysis of processes of interpretation, examining the ordering and coding of empty space through examples drawn from *Aspen 5+6*, edited by Brian O'Doherty. I framed Asher's critique of this private art gallery through close engagement with Owens' theory of allegorical reading, with support from Roland Barthes' 'Death of the Author' (1967), as well as engagement with Paul de Man's contrasts of literal and rhetorical reading in his essay 'Semiology and Rhetoric' (1979). My analysis showed how multiple contrasting readings of architectural structure are simultaneously possible, and that contradictions generated by the architectural structure of the gallery space are maintained through the normalisation of particular paradigmatic readings. I gave emphasis here to how the layout and separation of the exhibition and office spaces set a context for the interpretations of artworks, drawing out their economic and aesthetic dimensions within these different contexts. Close attention was given throughout to how Asher's intervention de-stabilised paradigmatic readings of the gallery space, thus allegorising the site.

Chapter Three extended this analysis of the interpretation and coding of architectural space as two moments in a singular process in order to raise questions of critical distance, using a set of examples that corresponded with James Meyer's notion of the functional site – operative spaces ordered through socially constructed patterns of interpretation and use and interactions with other material contexts. My contention throughout this chapter was that the space between critical practice and the institutional frameworks that received them had been eroded to the extent that critical practices themselves had now become conventional, and were imaginable as objects of ideology in much the same way as were the contexts they sought to critique. The role of legal and photographic documents in stabilising the site-specificity of Asher's installations, the integration of critical interventionist practices with museum commissioning and the rise of the service sector, the spectacularisation of new museum spaces, and the focus upon the production of social relationships in relational installations were all considered as examples of an erosion of critical distance.

Throughout these three chapters I have sought to trace the displacement of artistic media as they are constituted in high modernist criticism into the bounding frame of the gallery space. With the development of Asher's practice, both an apparatus of ideology and the technical support of his work were realised through one and the

same structure: the white walls of the gallery space. Thus, the border drawn between art and life, the support within which artistic autonomy is negotiated, was also the site of this artist's institutional critique. Whether as part of a white cube gallery or as part of a critical art installation, the same constructions of wood/steel frames or bricks and mortar, plaster and emulsion paint, are contested as either objects of ideology or as objects of ideology critique.

In the same way, it is a matter of nomination whether a gallery space is empty or if its emptiness has become the material and subject of an artwork; an issue that we saw was highlighted in the exhibition, 'Voids: A Retrospective' (2009). Krauss's recent writings draw upon this function of nomination, identifying processes of stabilisation and reactivation of conventions as constitutive of artistic media, whether they be traditional art forms (painting and sculpture) or emergent supports for practice (the gallery space itself). These are the same processes through which Althusser considers apparatuses of ideology normalise social practices and modes of interpretation. The stabilisation of paradigmatic readings supports repeated patterns of behaviour and the solidification of forms of ideology. Distancing such material structures from their ideological function thus becomes a key issue in the production of critical installations. In Chapter Three, I considered the difficulties that relational installations experienced in practice because their nomination of the gallery space as a social interstice often struggled to draw effective contrasts between forms of social interaction staged within and existing beyond the frame of the gallery space. The gallery space marks a threshold between spaces of art and life, but displacements of practices from the outside to the inside (such as Tiravniya's introduction of dining into the gallery) can ultimately appear emblematic of Krauss's post-medium condition, dependent on the capacity of the gallery space to frame them as art. The question of whether or not they qualify as critique remains less settled.

In such instances, autonomy appears as a given condition of the gallery space, shifting the question to how this condition might be effectively (critically) mobilised. White cube galleries have long been arenas of the kinds of recursion for which Krauss argues, from the address Greenberg claimed high modernist painting made to viewer's visual sensibility, to the reflections upon embodied perception which Morris sought to initiate. Yet these practices left the screening function of the gallery frame unremarked,

making these modes of practice not only part of the ideological function of the gallery space, but also the primary exemplars of the kinds of artistic experience through which its ideological function was constructed. Only with the focus in practices of institutional critique upon the social function of the gallery space as an institution of ideology, could this frame of artistic display be dismantled and turned towards what Asher termed 'aesthetic use value.'<sup>474</sup> Appearing to have stabilised around readings of autonomy, proposals such as the one made by David Beech in 'Autonomy v Barbarism', that gallery spaces can be turned to the propagation of autonomous social action, appear to propose the same orientation of the gallery's architectural frame as Asher outlined in 1983. Yet this turning continues to hinge upon the critical foregrounding of the received autonomy function of the gallery space, a function that practices of institutional critique have sought to perform for the last forty years. Thus, in the service of proposals such as Beech's, the continual displacement of the act of reading, from stabilised norms of reception through to the redeployment of historical modes of architectural intervention, can serve as a received set of strategies, used to mobilise the gallery space to these ends.

This is the manner in which I argue the exhibition 'Voids: A Retrospective' functions. The nomination of the different galleries within the Pompidou Centre as different exhibitions of empty gallery spaces drawn from art history allowed the museum's own galleries to be read through these historical projects. One could perpetually move around the art museum encountering recurrences of architectural formats, recursively read through these different yet related historical works, producing a complex system similarities and differences between different historical mobilisations of the same white cube conventions. A similar layering of histories of architectural production within the context of a single museum space was also evident in Asher's 2008 Santa Monica Museum of Art installation, in which he re-staged all of the wall frames erected as part of the museum's temporary exhibitions programme, making the diverse constructions of this museum space simultaneously available to gallery visitors. O'Doherty's *Aspen 5+6*, a work that collates other works that each explore the framing of empty space in various different ways, can be understood to function in a similar manner. Working through the magazine, one might encounter a perpetual rotation of the same set of issues in novel configurations.

---

<sup>474</sup> Michael Asher, in Buchloh, ed., 1983, p. 96.

Thus, forms of allegorical reading developed throughout the history of institutional critique and analysed by Craig Owens, and Krauss's recent re-framing of Shklovsky's knight's move in relation to installation art, remain potent strategies of critique, offering solutions drawn from art history to the demands that Beech makes of today's gallery spaces. Such a set of proposals belong more to a perpetual recoding of architectural space, as an invitation to re-assess modes of social interaction within those spaces, than the re-imaging of life on the basis of art that Bürger identified with the historical avant-gardes; yet, within the context of post-relational debates, these proposals can serve to re-animate art's function of criticality, so as to invite forms of critical reading and even the forms of autonomous social interaction that Beech proposed.

Despite the recent re-imagining of critical art practice to these ends, discussions of recent projects can remain split between a focus upon architectural structure and social interaction. David Joselit's analysis of the New York-based collaborative project *Orchard* (2005/8), in which Andrea Fraser was a partner, begins by criticising histories of institutional critique for 'traditionally target[ing] assemblages of *objects* whilst minimising or overlooking altogether their human dimension.'<sup>475</sup> Yet, as we saw with Claire Copley's assessment of how Asher's 1974 installation within her gallery enabled her to grasp the role she performed as part of the gallery apparatus, people's interpretative acts and modes of action are shaped in response to the contexts within which they are situated. Thus, I argue that to draw divisions between these two aspects of architectural experience remains artificial: an invalid strategy. The emphasis that Joselit brings to the fact that the agents of critique within this project were also the people who were responsible for the management of the space indicates a much more effective development in critical practice that can be read in relation to Beech's proposal for the gallery space.

Hal Foster's recent article, 'Post-Critical', focuses upon the attribution of cultural authority to critical art practitioners, drawing on Bruno Latour's claim that whilst such agents of critique aim to de-mystify the objects of their analysis, they also fail to de-mystify their own role. Echoing his earlier acknowledgements in the 1980s and 1990s

---

<sup>475</sup> David Joselit, 'Institutional Responsibility: The Short Life of Orchard', *Grey Room*, 35 (Spring 2009), p. 109.

of the complicity of practices of postmodern critique with the modes of representation they sought to interrogate, Foster claims to understand 'the fatigue that many feel with critique today, especially when, taken as an automatic value, it hardens into a self-regarding posture.'<sup>476</sup> Nevertheless, he also argues that 'critique is never enough: one must intervene in what is given, somehow turn it, and take it elsewhere. Yet that turning begins with critique.'<sup>477</sup> Like Foster, throughout this study, I have sought to argue the case for the continuing relevance of historical interactions between white cube conventions and institutional critique. Yet, in a context where, as we have seen, critique functions as part of the institutional frameworks it seeks to interrogate, as a form of immaterial labour or services offered to a host institution, I argue that the task of turning has to begin with the apparatus of display and conventions of critical practice themselves, in order to effectively generate opportunities for critical reading and, finally, to turn the autonomy status of the gallery itself towards facilitating the critical distance such interrogative acts require, instead of ideologically maintaining the separation of art and life. The fact that critical distance has diminished heightens the demand that artists, curators, gallerists and gallery visitors themselves manufacture spaces of critique. Once made, the interrogative readings of artists or gallery visitors alike might then translate into social action.

---

<sup>476</sup> Hal Foster, 'Post Critical', *October*, 139 (Winter 2012), p. 6.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

- Alberro, Alexander, 'Institutions, Critique and Institutional Critique', in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds., *Institutional Critique: an Anthology of Artists' Writings* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 2009), pp. 2-19
- Alberro, Alexander and Blake Stimson, eds., *Institutional Critique: an Anthology of Artists' Writings* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 2009)
- 'Allen Ruppertsberg: Biography', <<http://www.martinjanda.at/en/artists/allen-ruppertsberg/biography/>>, [accessed 11 August 2013]
- Althusser, Louis, *For Marx*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005)
- *On Ideology* (London: Verso, 2008)
- Althusser, Louis and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London: New Left Books, 1970)
- Alloway, Lawrence, 'Talking with William Rubin: Like folding out a hand of cards', *Artforum* (November 1974)
- Armleder, John, and others, eds. *Voids: A Retrospective*, (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2009)
- Asher, Michael, 'On Works 1969 to 1979', in *Conceptual Art*, ed. by Peter Osborne (New York: Phaidon Press, 2002)
- *Writings 1973-1983 on Works 1969-79*, ed. by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983)
- Andre, Carl, 'Preface to Stripe Painting', in Miller, Dorothy C., ed., *Sixteen Americans* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1959)
- Andre, Carl and Phyllis Tuchman, 'An interview with Carl Andre', *Artforum*, 8:6 (June 1970), 55-61
- Archive Journeys/Tate Liverpool/The Architecture,  
<[http://www2.tate.org.uk/archivejourneys/historyhtml/bld\\_liv\\_architecture.htm/](http://www2.tate.org.uk/archivejourneys/historyhtml/bld_liv_architecture.htm/)>,  
[accessed, 01 August 2013]
- Ashton, Dore, 'New York Commentary', *Studio International* (March 1970)
- Austin, J.L., *How to do Things with Words*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975)
- B.S.M., 'Darling of the Architectural Avant-Garde for U.S. Designs Museum', *Art Newspaper* (November 2000)
- Baers, Michael, 'Michael Asher (1943–2012): Parting Words and Unfinished Work', e-



*flux*, 39 (November 2012),

<<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/michael-asher-1943%E2%80%932012-parting-words-and-unfinished-work/>>

Baker, George and others, 'Round Table: The Present Conditions of Art Criticism', *October*, 100 'Obsolescence' (Spring, 2002), 200-228

Ballatore, 'Sandy, Michael Asher: Less is Enough.' *Artweek* 5:34 (October 12, 1974)

Barthes, Roland, 'The Death of the Author', *Aspen* 5+6, ed. by Brian O'Doherty (New York: Roaring Fork Press, Fall -Winter, 1967).

-- *Image, Music, Text*, trans. and ed. by S. Heath, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977)

-- 'The Reality Effect', in *The Rustle of Language* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989)

Battcock, Gregory, ed., *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co, 1968)

Bear, Lisa and others, 'Discussions with Heizer, Oppenheim, Smithson', *Avalanche*, 1 (Fall 1970)

Beech, David, 'Autonomy v Barbarism', *Art Monthly*, 309 (Sept 2007)

-- 'Include me out!', *Art Monthly*, 315 (April 2008), 1-3

Belsey, Catherine, *Critical Practice*, (London: Methuen and Co, 1980)

Bennett, Tony, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, ed. by Bruce W. Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996)

Beshty, Walaed, 'Neo-Avantgarde And Service Industry: Notes on the Brave New World of Relational Aesthetics', *Texte Zur Kunst*, Issue 59 (September 2005)

Beshty, Walaed and Mark Godfrey, 'Parallax Views: Two comments on Michael Asher at the Santa Monica Museum of Art', *Text zur Kunst*, 70 (May 2008)

Beveridge, Karl and Ian Burn, 'Donald Judd', *The Fox*, (1975), 129-42

Bishop, Claire, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October*, 110 (Autumn 2004), 51-79

Bottomore, Tom, Laurence Harris, V.G. Kiernan and Ralph Miliband, eds. *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, (London: Blackwells, 2005)

Bourriaud, Nicolas, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 1998)

Brach, Paul, 'Cal Arts: The Early Years', *Art Journal*, 42:1, 'The Education of Artists', (Spring 1982), 22-29

Buchloh, Benjamin H.D., 'Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art', *Artforum* (September 1982)

-- 'Conceptual Art 1962-1969: from the aesthetic of administration to the Critique of Institutions', *October*, 55 (Winter 1990), 105-143

-- ed., *Michael Asher, Writings 1973-1983 on Works 1969-1979* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983)

-- 'Michael Asher and the Conclusion of Modern Sculpture', in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, ed., *Neo-Avant-Garde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1980), pp. 1-39

-- 'Moments of History in the work of Dan Graham', in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry* (Cambridge (Massachusetts): M.I.T. Press, 2003)

-- *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry* (Cambridge (Massachusetts): M.I.T. Press, 2003)

Buchloh, Benjamin H.D., Briony Fer, Gabriel Orozco, and Ann Temkin, *Gabriel Orozco* (New York: MoMA New York, 2009)

Buren, Daniel, 'Beware', *Studio International*, 179:920 (March 1970), 100-104

-- *Five Texts* (New York, London: Jack Wendler Gallery, 1973)

-- 'Function of Architecture: Notes on work in connection with the places where it is installed taken between 1967 and 1975, some of which are specially summarised here', *Studio International* (Sept-Oct 1975) and reprinted in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne, eds., *Thinking About Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 1996)

-- 'The Function of the Museum', in *Daniel Buren catalogue* (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art Oxford, 1973)

-- 'The Function of the Museum,' in A.A. Bronson and Peggy Gale , eds., *Museums by Artists* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983),

-- 'The Function of the Studio', trans. by Thomas Repensek, *October*, 10 (Fall 1979)

-- *Intervention II, Works in Situ: Modern Art Oxford* (Oxford: Modern Art Oxford, 2006)

Bürger, Peter, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1974); trans. by Michael Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984)

Burgin, Victor, 'Situational Aesthetics', *Studio International*, 178:915 (October 1969),

118-121

-- *Situational Aesthetics: Selected Writings by Victor Burgin*, Lieven Gevert Series Vol. 9 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009)

Buskirk, Martha, *The Contingent Object in Contemporary Art* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 2003)

Buskirk, Martha and Clara Weyergraf-Serra, *The Destruction of Tilted Arc: Documents* (Massachusetts, M.I.T. Press, 1991)

Cavell, Stanley, *The World Viewed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979)

Coolidge, John, *Patrons and Architects: Designing Art Museums in the Twentieth Century* (Fort Worth, Texas: Amon Carter Museum, 1989)

Coplans, John, 'Larry Bell', *Artforum* 43:9 (June 1965), 27-29

Correia, Alice, 'Fred Wilson', *Third Text*, 25:5, 112 (October 2011)

Costello, Diarmuid, 'On the Very Idea of a 'Specific' Medium: Michael Fried and Stanley Cavell on Painting and Photography as Arts', *Critical Inquiry*, 34:2 (Winter 2008), 274-312

Crimp, Douglas, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993)

Croce, Benedetto, *Aesthetic*, trans. by Douglas Ainslie (New York: The Noonday Press, 1966)

Crow, Thomas, *Modern Art and Modern Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996)

Crimp, Iris, 'Statement Read at the First Open Hearing of the Art Worker's Coalition,' New York School of Visual Arts Auditorium, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1969, printed in the record of the hearing <<http://primaryinformation.org/files/FOH.pdf>> [accessed: 10 August 2013]

'Daniel Buren: Biography', <<http://www.barbarakrakovgallery.com/daniel-buren?bio/>>, [accessed 11 August 2013]

'Daniel Lamelas: Biography',

<[http://www.spruethmagers.com/artists/david\\_lamelas@@exhib/](http://www.spruethmagers.com/artists/david_lamelas@@exhib/)>

Day, Gail, 'Allegory: Between Deconstruction and Dialectics', *Oxford Art Journal*, 22:1 (1999), 105-118

-- *Dialectical Passions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011)

de Man, Paul, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979)

- 'Preface' in Carol Jacobs, *The Dissimulating Harmony: Images of Interpretation in Nietzsche, Rilke and Benjamin* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978)
- Deutsche, Rosalind, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1996)
- Dezeuze, Anne, 'Voids: A Retrospective', *Art Monthly*, 326 (May 2009)
- Duncan, Carol, *Civilising Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London: Routledge, 1995)
- Eskin, Blake, 'The Incredible Growing Art Museum', *ARTnews* 100 (October 2001)
- Flam, Jack, *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996)
- Foster, Hal, 'The Crux of Minimalism', in *Individuals: A Selected History of Contemporary Art 1945-1986*, ed. by Howard Singerman (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986)
- 'PostCritical', *October* 139 (Winter 2012)
- 'Postmodernism: A Preface', in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Washington: Bay Press, 1983)
- 'Re:Post', in Brian Wallis and Marcia Tucker, eds., *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, *Documentary Sources in Contemporary Art*, 1, (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), pp. 189-202
- 'Whatever Happened to PostModernism?', in Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1996), pp. 205-226
- Frampton, Kenneth, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980)
- Frascina, Francis, 'Inside the Last Great American Whale: The Politics of Modernism', *Circa*, 46 (Jul-Aug 1989), 3-22
- Fraser, Andrea, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique', *Artforum*. 44:1 (Sep 2005), 278- 286
- 'Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk', *October* , 57 (Summer 1991)
- 'Procedural Matters: Andrea Fraser On The Art Of Michael Asher', *Artforum* (Summer 2008)
- 'What's Intangible, Transitory, Mediating, Participatory, and Rendered in the Public Sphere?', *October*, 80 (Spring 1997), 111-116

Fried, Micheal, *Art and Objecthood*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967)

-- 'New York Letter: Judd', *Art International*, 8:1 (February 1964), 26

-- *Three American Painters: Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Frank Stella*; Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, 21 April - 30 May 1965, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965)

-- 'Two Sculptures by Anthony Caro', in *Modern Sculpture Reader*, ed. by David Hulks, Alex Potts, and Jon Wood (Leeds: The Henry Moore Institute, 2007)

Glaser, Bruce, 'New Nihilism or New Art? Interview with Judd, Stella and Flavin', in James Meyer, *Minimalism: Themes and Movements* (London: Phaidon, 2000)

-- 'Questions to Stella and Judd', *ARTnews*, ed. Lucy R. Lippard (September 1966)

Glicksman, Hal, interviewed by Rebecca McGrew, Hal Glicksman's home, Santa Monica, California, December 4, 2008

<http://www.pomona.edu/museum/exhibitions/2011/part-1-hal-glicksman-at-pomona/index.aspx/> [accessed 29 August 2013]

Glueck, Grace, 'Museum Beckoning Space Explorers,' *New York Times*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1970

Graw, Rebecca, 'It Happended at Pomona: Introduction',

<http://www.pomona.edu/museum/exhibitions/2011/it-happended-at-pomona/full-introduction.pdf/>, [accessed 28 June 2013].

Greenberg, Clement, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961)

-- 'After Abstract Expressionism', in *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4, Modernism with a Vengeance 1957-1969*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 121-133

-- 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', *Partisan Review*, New York, VI:5 (Fall 1939), 34-49

-- 'Modernist Painting', *Art & Literature*, Lugano, 4 (Spring 1965)

Greenberg, 'The Exhibited Redistributed: A Case for Reassessing Space', in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne, eds. *Thinking About Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 1996)

Greenberg, Reesa, Bruce W Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne, eds. *Thinking About Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 1996)

Greimas. A.J. and François Rastier, 'The Interaction of Semiotic Constraints', *Yale French Studies*, 41, 'Game, Play, Literature' (1968), 86-105

- Haacke, Hans, 'Statement Read at the First Open Hearing of the Art Worker's Coalition', New York School of Visual Arts Auditorium, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1969, printed in the record of the hearing at <<http://primaryinformation.org/files/FOH.pdf>> [accessed: 10 August 2013]
- Hall, Stuart, 'Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser, and the Post-Structuralist Debates', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 2:2 (June 1985)
- Harvey, David, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1990)
- 'Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction', *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 88:2 (June 2006), 145-158
- Hegel, G.W.F., *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977)
- Horkheimer, Max, *The Eclipse of Reason* (London: Continuum, 2004)
- Huyssen, Andreas, 'The Search for Tradition: Avant-Garde and Postmodernism in the 1970s', *New German Critique*, 22, Special Issue on Modernism (Winter, 1981), 23-40
- Inde, Vilis R., *Art in the Courtroom* (Westport: Praeger, 1998)
- Jacobs, Paul and Saul Landau, eds., *The New Radicals A Report with Documents*, (London: Random House, 1966)
- Jameson, Fredric, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso Books, 1992)
- Jencks, Charles, 'Deconstruction: The Pleasures of Absence', in *Deconstruction*, ed. by Andreas Papadakis (London: Academy Editions, 1998)
- Johnson, Lyndon B., <<http://www.lbjlibrary.net/collections/selected-speeches/1965/01-20-1965.html>> [accessed 29 August 2012]
- Joselit, David, 'Institutional Responsibility: The Short Life of Orchard', *Grey Room*, 35 (Spring 2009)
- Judd, Donald, *Complete Writings 1959 – 1975* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design: New York University Press, 1975)
- 'fluorescent lights, etc.', in Paula Feldman and Karsten Schubert, eds., *It is what it is: writings on Dan Flavin since 1964* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004)
- 'Specific Objects', *Arts Yearbook*, 8 (1965)
- Karp, Ivan and Fred Wilson, 'Constructing the Spectacle of Culture in Museums', *Artpapers*, 17: 3 (May-June 1993), 2-9
- Kaye, Nick, *Site Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (London:

Routledge, 2000)

Kennedy, Christina and Georgian Jackson eds., *Beyond the White Cube: A Retrospective of Brian O'Doherty/Patrick Ireland* (Dublin: Hugh Lane Gallery, 2006)

Krauss, Rosalind E., 'Allusion and Illusion in Judd', *Artforum*, 4:9 (May 1966), 24-26

-- 'And Then Turn Away: An Essay on James Coleman', *October*, 81 (Summer 1997), 5-33

-- 'The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum', *October*, 54 (Fall 1990)

-- 'LeWitt in Progress', *October*, 6 (Autumn, 1978), 46-60

-- *The Optical Unconscious*, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993)

-- *Perpetual Inventory* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 2010)

-- 'The Predicament of Contemporary Art', in Hal Foster et al., eds., *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Anti-Modernism, Post Modernism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004)

-- 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', *October*, 8 (Spring 1979), 30-44

-- *Under Blue Cup* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 2011)

-- *A Voyage Upon the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000)

Kubler, George, 'Style and Representation of Historical Time', in *Aspen 5+6*, ed. by Brian O'Doherty (New York: Roaring Fork Press, Fall -Winter, 1967)

Kwon, Miwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 2004)

Kwon, Miwon and Elsa Longhauser, *Michael Asher: Santa Monica Museum of Art* (Santa Monica: Santa Monica Museum of Art, 2008)

Lazzarato, Maurizio, 'Immaterial Labour', in Paulo Virno and Michael Hardt, *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006)

Leider, Philip, 'Literalism and Abstraction: Frank Stella's Retrospective at the Modern', *Artforum*, 8:8 (April 1970), 44-51

Licht, Jennifer, *Spaces, exhibition catalogue* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1969)

Mandel, Ernst, *Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1978)

Mandelbaum, Ellen, 'Isolable Units, Unity, and Difficulty', *Art Journal* 27, 3 (Spring, 1968), 256-261, 270

Martin, Stewart, 'Critique of Relational Aesthetics', *Third Text*, 21:4 ( July 2007), 369-386

- Marx, Karl, *Capital*, trans. by Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976)
- *Capital*, Vol. III, 4th Impression (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971)
- *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, in Lawrence H. Simon, ed., *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994)
- 'On The Jewish Question', in Lawrence H. Simon, ed., *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994)
- 'Theses on Feuerbach', in Lawrence H. Simon, ed., *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994)
- Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology: Part One* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970)
- *The German Ideology* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978)
- McClellan, Andrew, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008)
- MacLeish, Archibald, 'Museums and World Peace', *Museum News*, 23 (February 1946)
- McMillian, John and Paul Buhle, eds., *The New Left Revisited* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003)
- Matisse, Henri, 'Notes of a Painter', in Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book for Artists and Critics* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968)
- Meyer, James, 'Functional Site; or the Transformation of Site-Specificity', in *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*, ed. by Erika Suderburg (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 23-35
- Millin, Laura J., ed., *James Turrell: Four Light Installations* (Seattle: Centre on Contemporary Art, 1982)
- Montag, Warren, 'The Soul is the Prison of the Body': Althusser and Foucault, 1970-1975', *Yale French Studies*, No. 88, 'Depositions: Althusser, Balibar, Macherey, and the Labor of Reading', (1995)
- Morris, Robert, 'Notes on Sculpture: Part II', *Artforum* 5:2 (Oct, 1966), 20-23
- 'Notes on Sculpture: Part I', *Artforum*, 4:6 (February 1966) 42-44
- Museum of Modern Art New York, 'Entrance Information on SPACES exhibition', [http://www.moma.org/docs/press\\_archives/4395/releases/MOMA\\_1969\\_July-December\\_0088\\_162.pdf](http://www.moma.org/docs/press_archives/4395/releases/MOMA_1969_July-December_0088_162.pdf) [accessed 14 September 2012].
- O'Doherty, Brian, ed., *Aspen 5+6* (New York: Roaring Fork Press, Fall -Winter, 1967).



- 'Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space, Part I', *Artforum*, 14:7 (March 1976), 24-30
- 'Inside the White Cube, Part II: The Eye and the Spectator', *Artforum*, 14:8 (April 1976), 26-34
- 'Inside the White Cube Part III: Context as Content', *Artforum*, 15:3 (November 1976), 38-44
- *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986)
- ed., *Museums in Crisis* (New York: George Braziller and Art in America, 1972)
- *Studio and Cube*, (New York: The Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture, 2007)
- Brian O'Doherty, Mark Godfrey and Rosie Bennett, 'Public Spectacle', *Freize*, 80 (Jan-Feb 2004).
- Orton, Fred, *Appearing Literal* (London: Camberwell College of Art, 1987)
- Osborne, Harold, 'Artistic Unity and Gestalt', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 14:56 (July 1964), 214-228
- Owens, Craig, 'The Allegorical Impulse', *October*, 12 (Spring 1980), 67-86, and *October*, 13 (Summer 1980), 59-80
- *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power and Culture* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992)
- 'Earthwords', *October*, 10 (Autumn 1979)
- Peltomäki, Kirsi, *Situation Aesthetics: The Work Of Michael Asher* (The MIT Press: Massachusetts, 2010)
- Peppiatt, Michael, *Imagination's Chamber: Artists and Their Studios*, (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1982)
- Perl, Jed, 'Welcome to the Funhouse: Tate Modern and the Crisis of the Museum', *New Republic*, June 19 (2000)
- Perrault, John, 'Statement Read at the First Open Hearing of the Art Worker's Coalition', New York School of Visual Arts Auditorium, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1969, printed in the record of the hearing at <http://primaryinformation.org/files/FOH.pdf> [accessed: 10 August 2013]
- Potts, Alex, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000)

- Ramsden, Mel, 'On Practice', *The Fox*, 1 (1975)
- Ratcliff, Carter, 'New York Letter', *Art International*, 14:2 (February 1970), 78
- Raunig, Gerald and Gene Ray, eds., *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Re-inventing Institutional Critique* ( London: Mayfly, 2009)
- Rehberg, Vivian, 'Voids, A Retrospective', *Freize*, 123 (May 2009), available at [http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/voids\\_a\\_retrospective/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/voids_a_retrospective/) [accessed 26 August 2013]
- Reiss, Julie H., *From Margin to Centre: The Spaces of Installation Art*, (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1999)
- Roberts, John, 'Art, 'Enclave Theory' and the Communist Imaginary', *Third Text*, 21:4 (July 2007), 369-386
- Rorimer, Anne, 'Michael Asher: Context as Content', *Texte Zur Kunst*, 1 (September 1990), 151-162
- *New Art in the 1960s and 1970s: Redefining Reality* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001)
- Rose, Barbara, 'ABC Art', *Art in America*, 53:5 (October – November 1965), 57-69
- Saltz, Jerry, 'A Short History of Rirkrit Tiravanija', *Art in America* (February 1996)
- 'Santa Monica Museum of Art: Mission and History', Santa Monica Museum of Art Website, <<http://smmoa.org/index.php/about/mission>>, [accessed 10 August 2011]
- Sekula, Allan, 'Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation', in Allan Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photoworks 1973-83* (Halifax (Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984)
- Sernie, Harriet, "'Tilted Arc": Art and Non-Art Issues', *Art Journal* 48:4, Critical Issues in Public Art (Winter 1989), 298-302
- Serra, Richard, *Writings: Interviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994)
- Shklovsky, Viktor, *Knight's Move*, trans. by Richard Sheldon (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005)
- 'SHORT: Mark Dion: Methodology', from the VIDEO series 'art21 Exclusive', <<http://www.art21.org/videos/short-mark-dion-methodology>> [accessed 30 July 2013]
- Siegel, Jeanne, 'An Interview with Hans Haacke', *Arts Magazine*, 45:7 (May 1971)
- Smithson, Robert, 'Cultural Confinement', in Flam, Jack, *Robert Smithson: The Collected*

*Writings* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996)

-- 'Entropy and the New Monuments', *Artforum*, 4:10 (June 1966), 26-31

-- 'A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art', in Flam, Jack, *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996)

-- 'Some Void Thoughts on Museums', *Arts Magazine*, 41:4 (February 1967)

-- 'Towards the Development of an Air Terminal Site', *Artforum*, 5:10 (June 1967)

-- 'What is a Museum? A Dialogue between Allan Kaprow and Robert Smithson', *Arts Yearbook*, 'The Museum World' (1967)

Sontag, Susan, 'The Aesthetics of Silence', in *Aspen 5+6*, ed. by Brian O'Doherty (New York: Roaring Fork Press, Fall -Winter, 1967)

Spalding, Frances, *The Tate: A History* (London: Tate Publishing, 1998)

Spencer, John R., 'The University Museum: Accidental Past, Purposeful Future?', in Brian O'Doherty, ed., *Museums in Crisis* (New York: George Braziller and Art in America, 1972)

Steyerl, Hito, 'The Institution of Critique', in Raunig, Gerald and Gene Ray, eds., *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Re-inventing Institutional Critique* (London: Mayfly, 2009)

Stone, Eric Golo, 'A Document of Regulation and Reflexive Process: Michael Asher's Contractual Agreement Commissioning Works of Art (1975)', <<http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/a-document-of-regulation-and-reflexive-process-michael-asher%E2%80%99s-contractual-agreement-commissioning-works-of-art-1975/>> [accessed 13 July 2013]

Toche, Jean, 'Statement Read at the First Open Hearing of the Art Worker's Coalition', New York School of Visual Arts Auditorium, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1969, printed in the record of the hearing <<http://primaryinformation.org/files/FOH.pdf/>> [accessed: 10 August 2013]

Useem, Michael, 'Ideological and Interpersonal Change in the Radical Protest Movement', *Social Problems*, 19:4 (Spring, 1972), 451-469

Végh, Christina, Lane Relyea, and Chris Kraus, *Jorge Pardo* (London: Phaidon, 2008)

Walsh, Mary Ruth, 'A Labyrinth in a Box: Aspen 5+6', *Circa*, 104 (Summer, 2003)

Williams, Christopher, in interview with Fiona Conner, *Christopher Williams on Michael Asher and Post-Studio*, <https://soundcloud.com/fiona-Connor/Christopher-Williams-on-post>, [accessed 12 July 2013]

Williams, Raymond, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985)

Wilson, Julia-Bryan, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009)

Wood, John, Alex Potts and David Hulks, *The Modern Sculpture Reader* (Leeds: The Henry Moore Institute, 2007)

Wortz, Melinda, 'Looking Inward', *Art News*, 73:10 (December 1974)

Zinn, Howard, 'Marxism and the New Left', in Alfred L. Young, ed., *Dissent: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1968)